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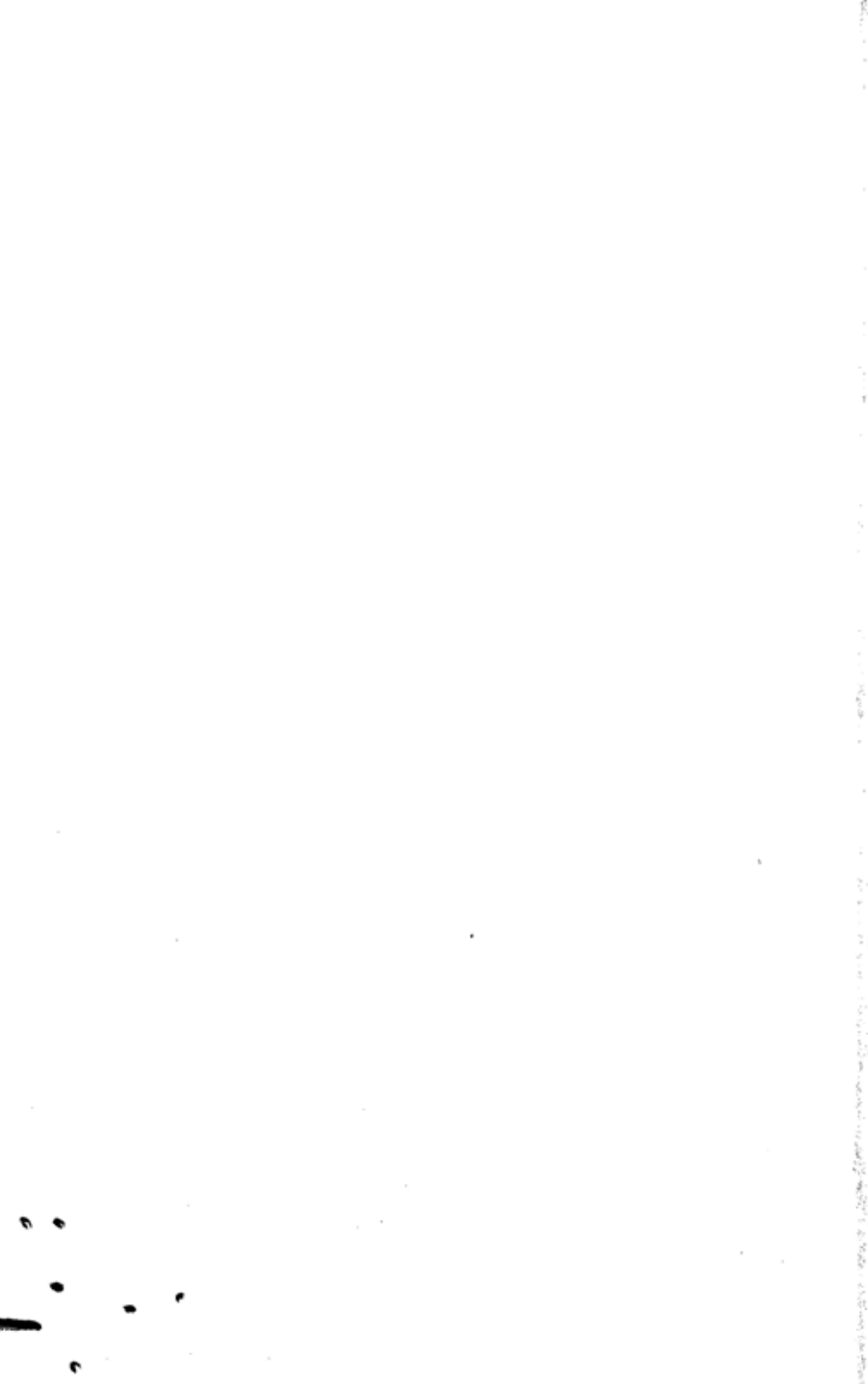
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The World of Archaeology  
CENTRAL ASIA—AFRICA—THE NEAR EAST





# The World of Archaeology

CENTRAL ASIA—AFRICA—  
THE NEAR EAST

MARCEL BRION

Translated by  
NEIL MANN

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## CHAPTER I

### THE CROSS-ROADS OF ASIAN CIVILIZATION

WHILST IN the ancient world the Mediterranean served to concentrate and transmit the civilizations that flourished on its shores or at least quite near to its waters, in Asia this part was not played by a sea but by the vast expanse of plains and plateaux. Not barren then as they are today, they were endlessly crossed by migrant streams of nomadic tribes. In antiquity, more than at any other time, civilizations travelled from one shore of the sea to the other—probably even across the oceans. It was as if races were tremendously impelled by a need to move, a need to change their dwelling-places, to see what other peoples did, to have exotic possessions and to sell their own produce in foreign markets.

It was this that led the ships of the Phoenicians to ply in all directions through the Mediterranean, from Spain to Syria, from Asia Minor to Morocco. Before them the Egyptians went in search of wood for their temples in the cedar forests of Lebanon; the Cretans too were active traders; and what wonderful sights those trading ports must have been when strange craft of all kinds would arrive, bearing the greatest variety of merchandise. The produce of Mesopotamia was exchanged for that of the Aegean Islands, the Iberians bartered with the Cappadocians, and in the favourable wake of this trade, bales of cloth and chests of pottery were succeeded by ideas, arts and religions.

Just the same thing happened in Asia, except that there were no ships to cleave through a wine-coloured sea and anchor in a peaceful bay but caravans that progressed slowly at the even pace of their camels across endless open spaces, bare steppeland and sandy wastes where mirages shimmered. They were merchants bearing precious goods, but migrant peoples also, making their way forward to the creaking of their carts and the tumult of their herds. Sometimes a murmur of terror would pass through the merchants and peaceable wayfarers as they heard the fast gallop of a horde of brigands patrolling the desert on their small horses, ready to attack some rich city and ravage it in a frenzy of fire and slaughter.

Caravans whose members had banded together to present a more impressive front and in that way to lessen the dangers of the journey; families seeking new dwellings; shepherds looking for

fresh pastures: these were the usual inhabitants in an empty country where the order was movement, change and travel. Yet sometimes whole peoples would break away from their lands; like a river bursting its banks they poured into the countries of their neighbours, driven by some unknown fear or fancy. And then the vast eddies would grow. Like some fantastic game in which everyone changes places at once, nations jostled one another, moving from country to country, looking for a stability that perhaps they did not want. There was immense disorder, chaos and confusion, but suddenly the raging seas grew calm; rivers resumed their natural courses; the nomads settled and took root in new civilizations. These were compounded in curious proportions of their original culture, that of the former inhabitants whose places they had taken or whom they had reduced to slavery, and those of the countries through which they had travelled for so long, occasionally borrowing from them certain customs, modes of dress or adornment, the shape of a vase, a belief or a rite.

This kind of dry sea—which probably was a sea when our earth was still a young planet—determined the commerce which gave Asia its present cultural form. Whatever came from Persia or the Roof of the World, from China, from India and the Northern Tundras met at the cross-roads where merchants arranged contact with one another and exchanged their wares. Strange stories could be heard then in the evenings in the caravanserais, before the town gates where strollers gathered to gossip round the fires of the halting places, whilst travellers were enveloped by the dense night of the steppe. There was information about different markets, and about new qualities of silk and pottery; there were colourful tales of the bazaar and political rumours about the governments of countries through which the travellers had passed. But sometimes a man who had been quiet until now would begin to speak, and all would listen to him, for his words were of things fantastic and gods they did not know.

With wonder and astonishment they handed one another Buddhist texts, Manichaean miniatures and Christian Gospels, for here Sinhalese missionaries met Nestorian monks, whom persecution had driven into exile; followers of Manichee; the servants of Fire and worshippers of the Devil. And there were others who bore unnamed idols to which they offered strange sacrifices.

In this way an area like the Tarim basin, for example, witnessed the passage of every kind of raw materials and fashioned goods, of cults and religions, arts and sciences, all of which intermingled, stimulated one another and sowed in one another the seed to create

new civilizations whose eclectic and syncretic character testified to the amazing diversity of sources from which they had sprung.

At length empires took shape and their boundaries were defined. Then climates changed; fertile plains became barren, and sand, which also drifts restlessly from country to country, soon covered lush fields and made a desert where formerly there had been gardens. The inhabitants drew back as the waste land relentlessly made its inroads; the sand gradually covered the towns which were now deserted, and in the caravans crossing some desolate plain travellers knew nothing of the mighty empires and beautiful cities that had once flourished where they were passing.

Centuries later, with the coming of archaeologists, the sand was shifted and ruins were cleared. Occasionally, when they came upon a grassy mound rising from the plain in front of them, they would call a halt, and through this mass of earth hollow out a passage to the tomb of some overlord. There, if robbers had not entered before them—which was rare—they would find the bones of horses, curious weapons and masks of gold. And just as in Hungary, where they found bronze figures that had come from the very north of Siberia or even China, so, in Mongolia, they found Greek fabrics and Roman glassware.

Every nomad who passed left some trace over plains that were endlessly crossed by tribes, caravans and armies. For this reason, combinations never conceived of were uncovered from the sand: images of Buddha with the smile of Apollo; Chinese portraits in a style that was Persian; and the most astonishing evidence of a Graeco-Asian culture or of Christianity with an admixture of Zoroastrian superstition. Civilizations, religions and arts of every kind met one another at this cross-roads. The goldsmith-armourers of the Caucasus worked on Mesopotamian themes, the bronze workers of Siberia used the motifs of Persia, the Chinese transformed models that were Hindu and Indonesian in origin; and the astonishing fact is that new civilizations were born of the meetings and intermingling that took place. Creations never dreamed of emerged from this curious mixture compounded through time. Archaeologists were amazed to discover a Grecian smile playing on the lips of the Enlightened One as though Dionysos himself and not Alexander had come to conquer India and teach her how to fashion her gods.

One finds it hard to imagine anything more completely absorbing than to explore the sites where evidence of these dead civilizations has come to light, for it was in Central Asia, enclosed as it seems by an impenetrable barrier of mountains and forbidding steppeland, that the most productive exchanges took place over the centuries.

The most inaccessible passes and the most fearful salt and sand deserts did not at any moment in historic or prehistoric times obstruct the roads which were the permanent links between north and south, east and west. At the same time, a vast network of routes, a spider's web of lines of communication, covered the boundless plains that were crossed with such difficulty by Buddhist missionaries, Christian heretics who had been excommunicated and driven into exile, and the last followers of Manichee, bearing the writings and paintings of their Master. From the northern confines of Mongolia to the passes between India and Afghanistan, the immense intermingling of peoples paved the way for new civilizations. In the area of Turfan, for example, we find a wondrous confusion of Hindu, Chinese and Iranian elements, complicated still further by the original cultures of the Uigurs or the Tocharians; and in Afghanistan, rock temples where enormous Buddhas are attended by Greek nymphs, Hindu apsaras and Chinese angels.

In order to appreciate the great commingling of races which took place in Central Asia, and the way in which these multitudes affected the rest of the world, we have to retrace the steps of the Huns from the Yellow River to Hungary; we have to follow the ways indicated by the bronze figures of the Scythians or Sarmatians (so-called for lack of a more definite term), and by the extraordinary, complicated jewellery unearthed from the *kourgans* of nomad chieftains. These so excited the curiosity of Peter the Great that he sent detachments of Cossacks to them to carry out the archaeologists' heavy work. Their efforts were not always without success but the disastrous consequences of their deficient technique are the despair of their modern successors.

At this juncture one cannot help wondering whether it was from Mongolia that the human race first set out on its cultural pilgrimage. Neolithic remains, such as those discovered by Mr. Roy Chapman Andrews in the sandhills of Chilian Hotoga, raise fascinating questions which we unfortunately have neither the space nor the time to discuss here.

The civilization of the steppes, of which René Grousset<sup>1</sup> has made a masterly study, goes far back into very earliest times. It was, indeed, in the palaeolithic age that Aurignacian culture made its way through the northern steppes, bringing its creative genius to Siberia, where statues reminiscent of the "Venuses" found in Europe were discovered at Malta on the Upper Yenissei, and to China, where Père Teilhard de Chardin's fascinating discoveries have revealed centres of very great antiquity in Shen-Si and Kan-Sou.

<sup>1</sup> *L'Empire des Steppes*, Paris, Payot, 1938. See also his excellent book, *De la Grèce à la Chine*, Monaco, 1948.

There is also evidence of Magdalenian culture in Siberia, Manchuria and China, where the caves of Shu-k'u-tien were found to contain bone needles, shell and mother-of-pearl adornments, and skeletons beside which there were pieces of ochre; this was used to stain corpses red in accordance with general custom and the curious religious beliefs of the time.

From the west again, comb-ceramics followed the same route during the neolithic age. They had been developed in Russia during the third millennium and had proceeded from there to Siberia and Kan-sou where their coming influenced the Chinese or proto-Chinese pottery of Ts'i-kia-p'ing. From the Ukraine a thousand years later, China received the beautiful pottery painted with a design of coiling ribbons which first came from the area of Tripolje near Kiev, from Schipenitz in Bukowin, from Petreny in Bessarabia and from Cucuteni in Moldavia. In China this style flourished once again at Yang-chao-t'souen in Ho-nan around 1700 B.C., and later in Pan-chan (Kan-sou). According to Tallgren, it is probable that the bronze age had its beginnings in Western Siberia towards 1500 B.C., in concert with the great Danubian bronze civilization of the same period (the Aunietitz civilization). In Central Siberia, at Minusinsk, however, it is not likely that bronze came into use until some three hundred years later (towards 1200 B.C.). The West Siberian axes and spear-heads copied in China have led Max Loehr to think that the use of bronze came to China from Siberia at about this time (c. 1400 B.C.). In the opinion of René Grousset and of most archaeologists, Chinese art and the art of the steppes had an equal influence on one another: the bronze workers of Minusinsk gained as much perhaps from the Chinese as they gave to them.

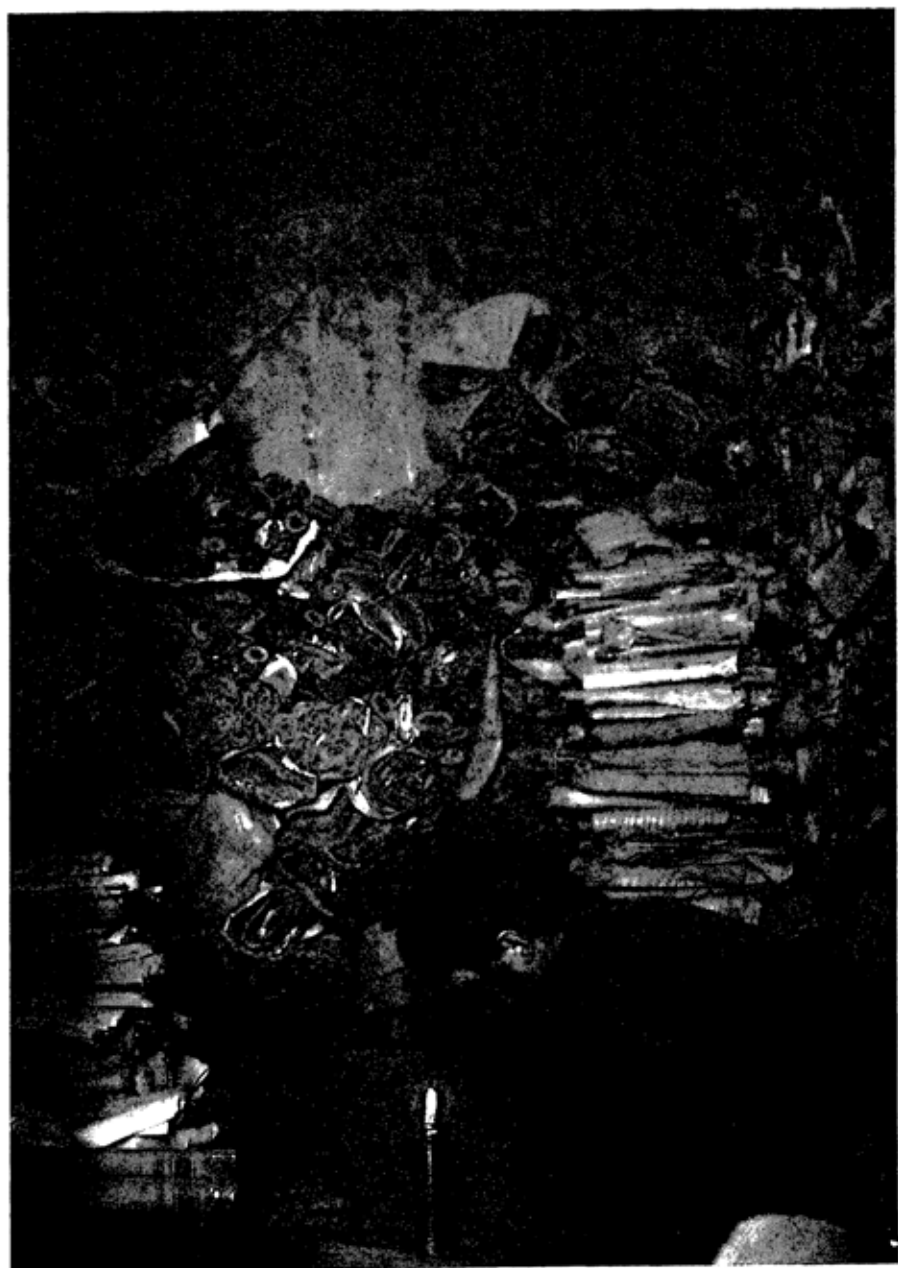
The Minusinsk workshops, placed on the northern slopes of the Sayansk Mountains, exerted their influence on Europe through great invasions, and on China probably through the intermediary of the nomad Huns who lived within the loop of the Ordos Desert. But the art of Minusinsk was itself the outcome of that extraordinary synthesis of forms and styles engendered by the perpetual movement of wandering peoples. These nomads, whose way of life did not permit them any greater artistic scope than ornamental designs for their chariots, weapons, harness or jewellery—there was no question of architecture or sculpture of any size of course—specialized in small objects of fine craftsmanship and delicate beauty of form and expression. There was much that they gained from Mesopotamia, and on certain "Cimmerian" weapons, Sumerian themes have been copied exactly. Iran also left its mark on the Scythians, whose incursions into that country were quite frequent. The elements of their

art were provided by animal forms, used and sometimes distorted very freely, but with a wonderful sense of dramatic expression.<sup>1</sup>

The sites—even the main ones—that have yielded fabulous treasures (most of which are in Russian museums) are altogether too numerous to mention. We find, for example, the necropolis at Ananino on the Upper Volga, where animal motifs met and combined with geometric art; the tombs of Kerch, Kelermes and Chigirin; or the “treasures” of Kouloba and Kostromskaya, where the extraordinary conventions of a vegetable style were applied to animal forms—a treatment subsequently to recur in certain Persian carpets. Grousset tells us: “the antlers of deer, horses’ manes—even cats’ claws are embellished with flourishes and spirals that sometimes make the animals twice their normal size. Even the upper lip of a horse is made to coil back. In the Scytho-Sarmatian art of Western Siberia and in the similarly inspired art of the Hioung-nou in the Ordos Desert, animal forms are so interwoven with foliage, so stylized that—despite the consistent realism of their stag, bear or tiger heads—it is only with difficulty that the shapes of the animals can be distinguished in the designs. The horns and tails of the animals end in leaves or luxuriate into the shapes of birds.” Then there are the funeral vaults of Noin-oula, where magnificent carpets—the nomads’ richest pleasure—were preserved; the kourgans of Nikolayev and their wonderful bronze tools which go back to the end of the second millennium; the famous tomb of Maikop, which contained vases of gold and electrum, and animal statuettes deriving from Mesopotamia in their inspiration (in the middle of the second millennium); the graves of Pasyryk, where the Gryaznov expedition unearthed the bodies of horses wearing the masks of reindeer; the Altaic group and their Sarmatian implements . . . to say nothing of the many recent, highly illuminating excavations that have taken place.

On these sites there is a special interest in finding objects that belong to the most diverse civilizations: Chinese lacquerware in the kourgans of Chibe; Graeco-Roman masks in the tombs of Bateni and Znamenka; Greek fibres at Noin-oula in Mongolia; and again Chinese lacquerware and silks at Oglatky. In the course of more active and systematic excavations, a variety of objects has been brought to light—some of which have compelled us to revise our opinions concerning the nature and character of ancient civilizations; the stone statues of bears, rams and elk throw new light on them thanks to the discoveries of Gryaznov, Grakov and Teplukhov. Tallgren brought this home to us in 1938 with reference to the

<sup>1</sup> Tamara Talbot Rice has made a penetrating study of this art in *The Scythians*, Thames and Hudson, 1957. The work is lavishly illustrated.



Paul Pelliot at Tuen Huang





The ruins of Karakhoja



*Fig. 1 Sphinx with wings and horns, half-man, half-lion, felt superposed on mural tapestry, Pasyryk*

civilizations of Andronovo and Karasuk. At Pasyryk, Golomshtok and Kiselev found tombs "filled with ornamental works of art, sculptured wooden bas-reliefs, inlaid work in leather or thin shaped felt, leather objects worked in silver or covered with gold leaves, carved leather, etc".<sup>1</sup> The most astonishing techniques and materials were employed by these brilliant nomad artists who were able to make such wonderful use of their animal themes—constantly renewing them in a thousand different ways. "The greatest variety of materials—wood, leather, felt, silver, gold, in reds, blues and yellows—was used by them in their artistic designs for harness. Eagles, elk, reindeer, mountain-rams, panthers and griffins in full flight; a strange confusion of animals—some with their heads in the mouths of others, carnivorous animals attacking the creatures of

<sup>1</sup> A report by the Soviet Academy of Material Culture, 1931.

the mountains and forests, who fall on their backs in a way characteristic of wounded beasts. The immense range of these combinations testifies to a culture of extraordinary artistic wealth."<sup>1</sup>

From China to the Danube, styles met and interfused, and the nomads, who did such excellent work in passing on forms and ideas, played their part like insects bringing pollen. From Hungary to the China Sea, ideas were scattered and took root, techniques were developed and elaborated, and it was the nomad who made this possible. There were some places on the other hand that served as veritable pivots for disseminating clever new methods or concepts. René Grousset has rightly pointed to Minusinsk, for example, as a "geometrical locus of the art of the steppes, halfway between the Black Sea and the Gulf of Pechili". One wonders how many other sites there may be, barely explored and scarcely seeming to have any importance as yet, of which the same thing can be said. The Cimmerians, the Scythians, the Sarmatians and the Huns, customarily recalled as barbarians or savages who delighted in destroying anything they met with on their way, were in fact the creators of a new art echoed still in the medieval sculpture of Scandinavia, in Irish church miniatures and even in the sculpture of our own cathedrals.

If we now consider painting, which did not truly derive from nomad art but came very close to it in its style, we find such examples as the frescoes of Durbeldji and Ilkhe Alyk on the Orkhon, the rock paintings of Mongolia and Siberia, the drawings (with runic inscriptions) of Sulek, the frescoes of Tannou Oula (possibly under Graeco-Scythian influence), and those from the neighbourhood of Minusinsk which show a kinship with the fascinating "Graeco-Sarmatian" paintings of Kerch in the Crimea.

From palaeolithic times down to the Middle Ages, the endless wandering of whole peoples brought a vital force to the "empire of the steppes" and stimulated an artistic growth of astonishing beauty. The tombs of these peoples are scattered in profusion over the country stretching from the Danube to the coast of China, and every tomb has its treasure; plunder, relics of the Roman and Chinese empires are mingled with the weapons and harness on which the Scythians, Sarmatians or Huns lavished their subtle skills and exuberant imaginations. Whether their stay in a country was long or fleeting, the wanderers exchanged their traditional methods, their most personal styles, their symbolic patterns or their decorative themes with those of the permanent inhabitants. The consequences of this were on the one hand a wonderful

<sup>1</sup> Report by the Soviet Academy of Material Culture, 1931.

flowering of original ideas, and on the other curious hybrid developments which have not yet been fully investigated or defined.

Races themselves often merged with one another. Their languages coalesced and their physical types changed. Radloff tells us that at the time of Gardizi, the Kirgiz still had white skins and red hair. Chinese chroniclers have left us the most vivid and characteristic picture of the Hsiung-Nou, an invading people who devastated a part of the empire before turning against Europe where they were called Huns. Styles of all kinds, whether geometric or animal, would meet and fuse with one another in certain periods, whilst in others they preserved clearly determined spheres of influence. In the same way, races exchanged their produce, their culture and their beliefs; in the animal forms passed on from Iran and Mesopotamia they found once again the last traces of ancient magical cults that possibly went back to the original Aurignacian and Magdalenian migrations.

If we now pass from the civilization of the steppes to that of Tarim, which has been recently studied by Paul Pelliot, Albert von Le Coq and Grünwedel, we find the same profuse interchange, blending and endless productivity. The silk route, which passes through the oases of this region, played just as important a part as the route through the northern steppeland where the galloping hordes forced their way. Arts and religions, following in the wake of merchants' caravans, were transported by pilgrims, Buddhist and Nestorian missionaries, the followers of Manichee, Chinese on their way to the shrines of India to bring back holy scriptures, and Hindu monks who brought their teachings to China. The north witnessed the mutual inspiration of the nomad tribes and the peoples they visited or conquered from Siberia to China. In the south, from Afghanistan, the cradle of Tarim's civilization, right up to the shrines of Tuen-Huang, where the mark of this composite culture was to remain, a line of caravanserais, monasteries and temples was visited by pilgrims, merchants and artists. In the north religion was violent, animistic and still permeated by primitive totemism. In the south, from India to China, Buddhism spread its gentle teachings of peace, light and renunciation.

But the field of archaeology in Central Asia is immensely complex; the work of archaeologists is not adaptable to an incomplete survey—especially when the area covered is as vast as that explored by Sir Aurel Stein. He found the point where Alexander crossed the Hydaspes to battle with Poros, and, by following the route of the Macedonian's victories, the remains of Jatalpur, which Alexander had founded and called Boukep-Hala in honour of his horse; he

found the centre of Jain civilization at Murti, the unknown civilization of Makran, the cairns of Damba-Koh, the strongholds of Nandana, where Mahmoud the Ghaznevid had ridden, and many other places of such interest that mere mention of them indicates nothing of the immense wealth of his discoveries.

The question of "Scythian" or "Sarmatian" art also calls for elaboration that cannot be conceded to it here, for the ethnic and aesthetic considerations it entails would take us beyond the scope of this work. The rule we have set ourselves of studying recent discoveries alone prevents us from touching as we should like (and perhaps ought to do) upon the work of Paul Pelliot, Albert von Le Coq and Albert Grünwedel, in the prolific Tarim Basin. J. Hackin's new research in this region will, however, bring us to the sites of Bazaklik, Murtuk and Qyzil which have been freshly studied by him and have yielded valuable information which usefully concludes the earlier work of Pelliot, Grünwedel and von Le Coq.

René Grousset specifically underlined the importance of this region when he wrote<sup>1</sup>: "Central Asia—'Kashgaria' as it was known to the geographers of the ancient world, 'Serindia' as Sir Aurel Stein called it, and 'Sinkiang' or Chinese Turkestan, as it is referred to today—consists in its cultivated area of two oasis chains: Kashgar, Kusha, Qarashar and Turfan in the north, Yarkand, Khotan, Niya and the sites of Lob-nor in the south. These oases, Turkish in character since the eighth and ninth centuries A.D., were previously inhabited by Indo-European peoples whose languages were recently re-discovered by the expeditions of Pelliot, Aurel Stein and von Le Coq: Tocharian (spoken at Turfan and Kusha), which was a language of western Indo-European type, related not only to Armenian and Slavonic but even, it seems, to Italo-Celtic; Eastern Iranian (spoken in Khotan) and Sogdian, another Iranian dialect of Transoxiana which travelled with the caravans of this country as far as the frontiers of China. In the eighth century, the area of this region round Kusha, Qarashar and Turfan fell into the hands of the Uigur Turks, the most civilized of the Altaic peoples. Although under them the country became Turkish in character, they preserved, as we shall see, its Indo-European cultural heritage; this chain of oases, situated in the midst of a vast desertland, played a rôle in history which was almost as important as that of the Aegean Islands. In this respect it might well be said that the Gobi Desert, a sea of sand and rock endlessly crossed by waves of caravans, was another Mediterranean in the very interior of Asia; the cultures on its shores communicated, and making contact, gave

<sup>1</sup> *Les Civilisations de l'Orient*, Paris, 1930, vol. III, p. 143.

rise to a new humanism and a new Alexandrian spirit. Just as the Hellenism of Alexandria exercised a unifying force on the Egyptian, Syro-Chaldaean and Graeco-Latin cultures, so Indian Buddhism, as it spread across Central Asia from the second century A.D., imparted a prolific synthesis of Greek, Indian and Iranian artistic influences within the unity of its religious faith."

There can be no better summary of the syncretic nature of the art of Turfan, whose name encompasses different cultures deriving from the same parent civilization. It has been described and analysed at length by Albert von Le Coq and Albert Grünwedel.<sup>1</sup>

We shall touch no further on the subject of the Graeco-Buddhist civilization of Gandhara, which has already been extensively studied—and in particular by Alfred Foucher.<sup>2</sup> For those who are interested in these subjects but have not the time for long specialist works, I recommend the more approachable book by Ernest Waldschmidt, *Gandhara-Kutscha-Turfan*,<sup>3</sup> which gives a good *résumé* and a useful introduction to wider research.

The first explorers of this region were amazed to find evidence here, in wonderful specimens of their art, of a meeting-place for the civilizations of China, India, Persia and even Europe. The superbly illuminated Manichaean manuscripts were unknown before they were found at Turfan; and no one had conceived that the silk routes were also used by missionaries and artists whose efforts in the oases on their way made them the centres of a new heterogeneous civilization. Large towns and enormous monasteries, usually with frescoed walls, were built there, and as sand had gradually filled and covered their buildings, the pictures were so perfectly preserved that archaeologists found them just as they were when first they were painted. Von Le Coq and Grünwedel skilfully removed a large number of these pictures from their walls and they can now be seen at the Völkerkunde Museum in Berlin. Von Le Coq has told how the sand was shifted from cells and corridors; and how moved he was when he first saw these magnificent frescoes before him. When a place of worship sometimes changed hands, if the Manichaeans, for example, or the Christians, took possession of a former Buddhist temple, a thin wall was erected to cover the pictures.

<sup>1</sup> Especially worth noting are: Albert von Le Coq: *Die Buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien*, Berlin, 1924. Chotscho. Kön. Preuss. Turfan-Expedition, Berlin, 1913. *Bilderatlas zur Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Mittelasien*, Berlin, 1925. *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*, London, 1928. Albert Grünwedel: *Buddhistische Kunst in Indien*, Berlin, 1920. *Alt-Kutscha*, Berlin, 1920. *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkestan*, Berlin, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> *L'art gréco-bouddhique du Gandhara*, Paris 1922. *Etudes sur l'iconographie bouddhique de l'Inde*, Paris, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> Leipzig, 1925.

The Moslems, however, did not show the same deference. They scraped away the hated images, or at least erased their eyes and hands; for popular superstition held that this was the only way of preventing the men, animals or monsters who were depicted from coming to life during the night to torment poor travellers who came for shelter.

Despite the wealth of archaeological discoveries in this part of Turfan, it is a sorry fact that even greater treasures have been lost through intentional or unintentional acts of vandalism. At Karak-hoja, for example, von Le Coq arrived too late to save some wonderful paintings in which Sassanid and Greek styles had been incomparably interfused. He was also too late to save manuscripts. "One peasant told me," he relates, "that five years before the first expedition arrived, he had found in some temple ruins which were razed so that the site could be used as fields, large cart-loads of the manuscripts 'with little writing' (Manichaean) that we were so busily looking for. A number were illuminated in colours or gold, but he was frightened by the strange appearance of these manuscripts and he had thrown them all in the river."<sup>1</sup> As wood was scarce in Turkestan, the peasants of the neighbourhood pulled beams from the roofs and doorways with no concern for the collapse of the buildings which usually followed. Again, as we see today the wonderful frescoes which were mutilated through the Moslems' fanatic zeal, we can only grieve at the savage destruction that their hatred of images entailed.

In the great centres of the heterogeneous culture of Central Asia (Chotscho, Qysil, Tumshuk, Schortschuk, Kusha, Choten, Bazaklik, Murtuk, Tuen-Huang, and, above all, Turfan, which is the most important site despite its irreparable losses) surviving frescoes have provided archaeologists and students of beauty with an astonishing array of works of art in which Buddhist legend, more than any other, is treated in the Sassanid, Chinese or Hindu styles, or even in a style reminiscent of early Christian painting.<sup>2</sup>

These discoveries have given us what is virtually first-hand knowledge of Manichaeism; hymns, sacred texts and miniatures throw light on the personality of the great founder of a religion which might well have taken the place of Christianity. In Manichaean art there are qualities of realism and objectivity which almost suggest something of the art of the catacombs. In Arab and Persian tradition, Manichee (who is also referred to as Mani) is recalled more as a great painter than a prophet. Joseph Hackin, in his excellent

<sup>1</sup> *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*, London, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> Waldschmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

study of the last excavations at Bazaklik,<sup>1</sup> has given a most absorbing account of the Manichaean frescoes he found in rock sanctuaries.

Qyzil is one of the most interesting centres; in the "thousand caves" of this Buddhist monastery, where the cells and sanctuaries were decorated with paintings, styles of every description appear side by side. In some of these frescoes the Hindu gentleness and flexibility that inspire their figures are reminiscent of Ajanta. With others one is reminded of Hellenist art—of Pompeii and the catacombs. Within the cupolas there are angels in flight with their long sashes trailing behind them; there are knights in Iranian armour—who might well have been taken from a Persian miniature—playing their parts in episodes from the Buddhist Jatakas; and there are scenes that show a curious similarity with Byzantine mosaics. In studying the astonishing landscape which decorates the "Sea-horse Cave", one is inadvertently reminded of landscapes in the Mosque of Damascus and even, at times, of those of the Wiener Genesis.

In the sanctuary "with the red cupola" there is a compendium of ancient art; this is obvious to anyone who can recognize a Buddhist theme as it is handled in the Gupta, Chinese, Sassanid, or even Christian and Manichaean styles. Astounding though it seems, a magnificent collection of Christian manuscripts was found in some remote oases (notably at Shui-pang) in Central Asia. They were probably brought by Nestorian monks who are known to have founded communities which flourished in their day in India, China and Mongolia.

The *Cave of Treasure*, the *Boatman's Cave*, the *Cave of the Sixteen Sword-Bearers*, the *Peacock's Cave* and the *Cave of Musicians*, all so beautifully and so variously decorated, convey the very essence of art in Central Asia, where everything appertaining to religion or beauty was so readily absorbed. There has never been a more superbly decorated monastery than the *ming-oi* at Qyzil; its windows, opening from the rock, reveal a strikingly austere yet noble landscape. In its cells and chapels the gentleness and compassion of Buddhism are displayed with all the subtlety and skill that the art of Europe and Asia could bring to bear. But we should not forget the inevitable monsters and tantric demons, which remind us of the Tibetan taste for black magic, or the flute-players with skeletons dancing after them—for all the world like a medieval *danse macabre*. There is no clash and no disharmony. What we see is something new and powerfully original; the diverse sources on which it drew did not deprive it of its individual character or depth,

<sup>1</sup> *Recherches archéologiques en Asie centrale*, Paris, 1936.



and it actuates the very walls in a monastery which was open to all the elements of creative inspiration.

What is true of Qyzil is true of Tumshuk as well. There it is in sculpture that the blend of influences becomes most notably apparent. Typically Chinese techniques are present in statuettes which might otherwise have come from Tanagra or Myrina. Elsewhere we recognize holy men, saints and demons who betoken Gothic art. The harmony of these very different works derives from the skill with which characteristic details of treatment or execution combine but never conflict. There is no shock in finding Persian knights in the company of Greek youths, Chinese hermits or sensual Hindu spirits. A new aesthetic, homogeneous yet organic, borrowing its elements yet bringing something new, vigorous and profoundly different to all of them was born of an alliance between artistic inspiration and religious fervour. We can only conjecture how it might have affected the countries which had influenced it, and by giving instead of taking, what mark it would have left on Europe and Asia—from which it had exacted so much—if Nature had not destroyed the oases of Central Asia, and with them the flower of her art.

A visit to the sites of Central Asia will give conclusive answers to those who ask how artistic forms so very different could interfuse without losing their creative power; how instead of leading to the facile, artificial hybridism one might expect, they gave rise to forms which were completely new and original in the fullest sense of the word. It was Buddhism, with the spirit of communion it propagated, which made this interfusion possible. Perhaps no other religion, not even Christianity, though it had so strongly united Nordic and Mediterranean elements in the evolution of its art, could have imparted the same sense of serene, unearthly harmony which we find in Bazaklik, Murtuk, Qyzil or indeed in any of the sites we have mentioned.

René Grousset has shown with great insight how the art of Kusha made itself felt even in Siberia. In the knights, with their cone-shaped helmets and long lances, who appear in the rock paintings of Sulek (which was mentioned earlier) he recognizes the brothers of the horsemen of Qyzil, and in the "Kamennaya Baba" at Semipalatinsk, the stylistic features of Kushan frescoes.

Techniques were combined as well as tastes, and sometimes they were superimposed—like the Buddhist frescoes which were found covering Manichaean paintings. In *Les Recherches archéologiques en Asie centrale*<sup>1</sup> Joseph Hackin gives valuable information on this when he analyses the art of Bazaklik. "The Bazaklik murals," he

<sup>1</sup> Paris, 1936, p. 9.

says, "are clearly marked by Chinese influence no matter what the origins or background of the painters may have been, but it is important to draw certain qualitative distinctions. A few of these paintings, if they are not completely original, were at least the work of real artists who did not have recourse to a system of reproduction which was commonly employed at Bazaklik. This system was based on the use of stencils which provided the main lines of a composition. A perforated outline would be taken from the sketch. The stencil, when applied to the surface which was to be painted, and sprinkled with charcoal dust, would give a rough but adequate outline of the composition. This process, which made it possible for simple artisans to do the work, was often used in Central Asia in the ninth and tenth centuries A.D." Hackin has also shown the difference in technique between the painting of the Buddhists and the Manichaeans' paintings on walls of rock which were covered with a single coat of lime. The weakness of their method was that dampness soon caused the lime to come away. It was probably through this and because the Buddhists often re-covered them and painted over the new coating, that the paintings of the Manichaeans seldom survived.

The Buddhists mixed their coatings with much greater care; this separated their frescoes from the walls and protected them from damp. The plaster-coat they used was made from horse-hair, goat-bristles, dried grass, straw and chopped reeds, all of which, when mixed with clay, formed a remarkably solid surface.

Leaving Central Asia and striking out to the south-west, we come to another country which was subjected to a great diversity of artistic influences—Afghanistan. As the neighbour of Persia, India and Turkestan, it was always a cross-roads for the merchants who came in peace and for ruthless conquerors. The passes through the mountains surrounding it pointed the way for wealthy caravans and for hungry nomads alike. Its ancient ruins have always been a reminder that the armies of Alexander, setting out from Macedonia to march in conquest of Asia, came in advance of Greek civilization.

Behind Alexander were all Greece and Hellenistic civilization—in which the simplicity and grandeur of classical times were now subtly distinguished by a new and unlooked-for gentleness. Artists and philosophers marched with the soldiers of the Conqueror and wherever the bull-headed horse had passed the cities that rose bore the mark of Greece. There was nothing of the hard, imperious way of Rome but rather a tactful, studied and gentle influence. There were no forms imposed under cover of threats but a scarcely perceptible infiltration whose goal was harmony between the indigenous creative genius and the creative genius of Greece.

The idea of portraying the features of the Enlightened One had never been conceived in the Buddhist world of the time. He was commonly represented by symbols—not from any marked antipathy to the creation of a likeness, but through a kind of *indifference to the art of portrayal*.

Now, when confronted with the gods of the Greeks, the Buddhist world suddenly became alive to the gentleness and the beauty of anthropomorphism. Alexander's conquest was pre-eminently an aesthetic victory, for it gave an impetus to the art of Asia from which China and India were to benefit, and which first became evident in Afghanistan when the young general made his triumphant appearance.

Some centuries later, Buddhist pilgrims visited the monasteries where Greek artists had once collaborated with native painters and sculptors. The accounts they gave in the *travel diaries* they kept subsequently caught the attention of archaeologists. European scientists now set out on the route taken by Hiuan-Tsang thirteen centuries before them. The country had not changed very greatly: they soon recognized the places which the holy man had so accurately described—especially the mountain chains—but the towns were no longer there. They had been eaten away by the violent winds of Afghanistan, buried under sand, and razed all too often by the Moslems who pillaged and destroyed where the Greeks had once built. The splendid cities that had been the glory of an ancient civilization, the temples with their magnificent statues and the monasteries with their frescoed walls, were no more than mounds of earth and rubble.

The credit for entering this field of research belongs to French archaeologists; ever since Alfred Foucher, the great authority on Graeco-Buddhist art, founded the French Archaeological Commission (*Délégation archéologique française*), which has continued uninterruptedly to open new sites, it is to them that the merit of discoveries in Afghanistan must be ascribed. Guided by the accounts of Buddhist pilgrims, who were full of admiration for the beautiful buildings they saw on their travels, French archaeologists retraced the steps of Chinese monks who had once passed this way to India where their Teacher had lived. They came to a point where there were now only shapeless mounds, but, according to the minutely detailed description given by the Chinese travellers, this was the site of the town of Hi-Lo, a great artistic and religious centre which the pilgrims had praised very highly for its splendours. It was a worthwhile opportunity to check the geographical data and to establish whether the travellers had exaggerated.

This was the background to the first excavations begun in 1923

at Hadda, 8 kilometres south of Jallalabad, by the Archaeological Commission, directed first by M. Foucher and M. Godard and later by M. Barthoux. They began their work on the mound where the remains of the dead city lay buried.

It is no easy matter to describe what they found. Some years earlier, with the discovery of Graeco-Buddhist sculpture, the exploration of Gandhara had brought to light a completely unknown field in the history of art. The site at Hadda was no less rich nor less abundant in what it revealed. The earliest tentative investigations demonstrated the remarkable wealth of the ruins, but it was not until work had been completed that the full extent of this wealth could be measured. By the end of the expeditions of 1926, 1927 and 1928, there were thirteen sites more or less fully explored, and the crowning triumph for this work was an array of more than six thousand superb statues as well as some immensely important architectural remains. At Hadda, these, for the most part, are stupas and monasteries, usually very closely connected with one another, as though the stupa were virtually the monastery's holy place.

Whoever has studied Hindu archaeology (for these monuments originated in India) will know that the *stupa* is a kind of mound, sometimes quite ornate, which usually covers a temple containing a relic of the Buddha, or which was sometimes simply erected in his memory. There are innumerable stupas all over India, and one of the features of the Buddhists' entry into Afghanistan was that they often built these monuments; at Hadda five hundred of them have been found.

The stupas at Hadda are very strange in appearance and can best be described in the words written by J. Barthoux in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*<sup>1</sup>: "It is a brick building, consisting of one or two square bases, the last of which is surmounted by uniformly compact cylindrical structures. Each of these is drawn back from the previous one and separated from it by a platform projecting over the floor beneath. In larger buildings this lower platform serves as an ambulatory; it can be reached by a stairway which is perpendicular to one of the façades and turned exactly towards one of the points of the compass. Each façade is pilastered, with capitals almost in the classical Corinthian style. Between these capitals and fixed against the walls there were Buddhas—either walking or in meditation. In some places there must have been sculptured details in high-relief of legends or scenes of the life of Buddha, but not one has come down to us intact. The statuettes fell down before these delicate pieces of work were destroyed, and were consequently

<sup>1</sup> March, 1929. With very clear plans and photographs.

preserved in the dust which had accumulated in the cells or between the stupas."

Around the area occupied by the stupa or stupas, there was a walled enclosure; inside it there were chapels decorated with statues and bas-reliefs, and hard by this group of buildings stood the monastery with its cells opening on to a spacious courtyard. All these buildings were lavishly furnished with paintings, statues, bas-reliefs, high-reliefs and ornamental motifs, which, for the most part, were Hellenistic in origin. Greek influence is everywhere in evidence; if the themes are Asiatic, dealing as most of them do with incidents in the life of Buddha, their treatment is technically and aesthetically derived from Greek sculpture. This is less obvious in portraits of the Buddha; they seem to comply with certain canons which are based more on his moral character, with its benign gentleness, its resignation and detachment, than on an actual semblance. But it is manifest in attendant figures: the monks, angels, demons, spirits and priests who appear in the most extraordinary artistic works of Hadda.

Greek art entered so willingly into harmony with the Asiatic tendencies that remained in Afghan art because it was itself ready now to receive the wave of eastern influences which were to distinguish all Hellenistic art, whether in Pergamum or Etruria. The India and Afghanistan of Gandhara now seem like provinces of Greek art with its Asiatic trend, because after Alexander's conquest eastern elements regained a certain dominance, but also because there was a new swing of the pendulum which constantly balanced Greek art between west and east. The Greek art of this period was ready to diffuse its influence over Asia, for within itself perhaps, it felt a need for the stimulus Asia could give; in this period, as in all periods of the history of art, changes in stylistic forms were the marks of a profound change in attitudes and ideas. Small wonder then that we find statues at Hadda exactly like the bas-reliefs of Pergamum or Halicarnassus for it was in the same cultural environment that these works were created. Elsewhere we see all the gentleness and compassion of the statuettes of Tanagra—reproduced in the spirits surrounding a sleeping Buddha; we see the direct, passionate realism of the school of Scopas, which caught so perfectly the moving facial expression of a dramatically intense inner life; we see laughing children, ancestors of the *putti* of the Italian Renaissance; and a procession of youths bearing flowers—the very brothers of the grave yet beautiful Antinous so loved by the Emperor Hadrian.

It is truly remarkable to find all this in the depths of Asia, remote from the artistic centres of Hellenistic civilization, and even more

so to perceive such delicate balance in some of the finest work Europe and Asia have been able to produce. Clarity, truth, pure beauty, pleasures of the flesh and spiritual contemplation, a detachment from earthly things and the most refined sensuality—at Hadda these are united with even greater depth and subtlety than at Gandhara. A combination of real and idealized forms; Greek technical perfection, heightened here and there by Sassanid, Hindu or even Chinese detail; the sense of inner beauty that Plato spoke of, giving external expression to the doctrine of cosmic illusion which is the fundamental of Buddhism: all this was never so tellingly accomplished as at Hadda. Holy men—beset by ghouls and demons who might well have been fugitives from the bas-reliefs of a Gothic Last Judgement—are attended by protective spirits sent down from Olympus; when Buddha mounts to start out on his Noble Path, the young groom of Alcibiades holds the reins, and as he sleeps beneath the tree of Enlightenment, Apollo comes down to him with flowers in his hands.

The Art of Hadda was no doubt composite but like the dead cities of Tarim, it produced something new and original. The very great virtue of Hellenistic art was the help it gave each country to find its own aesthetic forms; the Greek models it brought were not for slavish imitation but a mirror in which each could recognize its own true image and penetrate, through a foreign aesthetic, to the essence of its own nature. This is what happened at Hadda during the first century before Christ and the century after that. It was a very triumphant period in the history of art but a short-lived one: barbarous invaders destroyed this splendour and the Moslem occupation put an end to the glory which the archaeologists of the Commission later revealed.

Whilst the excavations at Hadda were taking place, Joseph Hackin, one of the most outstanding authorities on Far-Eastern art, and especially that of Afghanistan, entered Kohistan where he found the remains of the famous Buddhist kingdom of Kapiçi. There he uncovered the ruins of Begram, an immensely rich and powerful city when Hiuan-Tsang came there; it was not far from Paitava where in 1924 Hackin found the red and gold statue of Buddha at the Great Miracle in the ruins of the ancient monastery.

Active excavations have taken place at Begram ever since and these have brought to light the important ruins of a Buddhist monastery with sculpture and many articles of Hellenistic origin: Greek bronzes; a great variety of cut, blown, painted and embossed Syrian glassware; also a considerable number of engraved or sculptured ivory plaques—Hindu in origin and showing a relationship with

the art of Mathura, of the second and third centuries A.D.; this actually corresponds with the period when Kapiçi, the ancient city which stood on the present site of Begram, was achieving its greatest prosperity under the Kushan kings and held not only the extremely important passes of the Hindu Kush but the great trade route from India to Bactria. This is all that remains of the mighty city in which, according to the Chinese pilgrims, six thousand monks lived in more than one hundred monasteries, with many temples, and hundreds of stupas, and where there were even heretics by whose curious behaviour the pious travellers were shocked. Legend has it that in Begram, in the great hall of the monastery, under the right foot of the statue of the King of Spirits there was a hiding-place where wonderful treasures were concealed. The evil and greedy king of a neighbouring country attacked the monastery, sent away its monks, and began to look for the treasure of which he had heard so much. But as his soldiers were digging at the ground, terrifying screams rang out: they were from the sculptured parrot in the crown of the King of Spirits, which was screeching to give the alarm. At its screaming the earth began to tremble and the king and his men were thrown down. It was only when the thieves had confessed their guilt and repented of it that the trembling ceased. The treasure of Begram may still be within reach of the archaeologists, but less well protected than it was: the parrot of the King of Spirits has gone.

Five kilometres east of Begram, the ruins of a vast group of Buddhist monasteries have been uncovered at Shotorak. They were described by M. Meunié in a volume of *Recollections of the French Commission in Afghanistan*.<sup>1</sup> The most important finds are bas-reliefs in schist, deriving from the Graeco-Buddhist art of the third and fourth centuries A.D. They show a remarkable similarity to Chinese sculpture of the Wei dynasty which evidently borrowed extensively from the Graeco-Buddhist style so well represented in the Shotorak monasteries.

"To the north-east of the royal city, by a mountain-side, there is an erect stone statue of the Buddha; it is between 140 and 150 feet high, of a bright golden colour and resplendent with precious ornaments. To the east (of the statue) there is a *k'ie-lan* (sangharama<sup>2</sup>) which was founded by an earlier king of this country. To the east of the *k'ie-lan* (sangharama), there is a standing statue of the Buddha Che-kia (Sakyamuni) of *t'eou-che* (brass) and one hundred feet high. The body was cast in pieces so that the statue could be completed and raised. Two or three *li* to the east of the royal city, in a *k'ie-lan* (sangharama), there is a recumbent

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de la Délégation française d'Afghanistan*.

<sup>2</sup> Monastery.

statue of the Buddha entering nirvana; this is more than one thousand feet long. It is in this sangharama that the king of the country arranges the great gathering of the *woutcho* (*moksa*). He gives everything, from his wife and sons even to his kingly jewels; and when he has no more wealth to give, he gives his royal person. Then his ministers and officers approach the monks to redeem the royal family and the royal treasures. It is considered necessary to proceed in this way (by gift and repurchase). Leaving the *Kie-lan* of the reclining Buddha and continuing on foot more than two hundred *li* to the south-east, you cross the great snow-capped mountains and arrive in the east by a little valley."

Today, a traveller approaching Bamian will find these places as they were just described<sup>1</sup> by Hiuan-Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim. Thirteen centuries have passed since he wrote of the splendours of Bamian in his diary. The many monasteries where thousands of monks lived have gone. The gorgeous polychrome facings of the giant Buddhas have been worn away and the religion of the people of the country has changed. Today they no longer worship the Three Jewels and the hundred divinities to which—as the Chinese monk observed with satisfaction—"They gave full-hearted and reverent homage." There is silence now in the caves that once echoed to singing and prayer. Genghis Khan devastated the city and monasteries, and having put all living creatures—men and beasts—to the sword, he cursed the "evil town". Conquerors have passed and the giant Buddhas still smile from the rock façades out of which they were carved. The paintings adorning the recesses of these great images have faded or worn away, but in them the harmony of Hellenistic grace and Hindu peace can still be perceived.

Joseph Hackin deserves most of the credit for discovering and describing this beautiful and extremely important archaeological site. His book *Antiquités bouddiques de Bamian* is a scientific work of prime importance, and he has also written a *Guide du Visiteur au site archéologique de Bamian*. These two books, one for the specialist and the other for visitors requiring more general knowledge, summarize between them everything we know of the history and art of Bamian.

The monasteries referred to by travellers have gone. Out of all the marvels they described, all that remain are rock sanctuaries carved out of the cliffs, immense Buddhas (one 35 metres high and the other 53) sculptured in the mountain itself, and a number of the smaller statues. The sanctuaries are important both for their architecture and their murals. With the delicate, complicated work

<sup>1</sup> The quotation was given by Hackin in his *Guide de Bamian*, Paris, 1934.



of their cupolas, and the ornamental arches in which statues of Buddha were housed, they represent a very remarkable period in the art of Afghanistan. M. Hackin tells us, "The Bamiyan frescoes, after those in caves 9 and 10 at Ajanta and Miran in Central Asia, are the oldest Buddhist paintings we have. They are also the first we find on the path of Buddhist expansion towards Central Asia."<sup>1</sup>

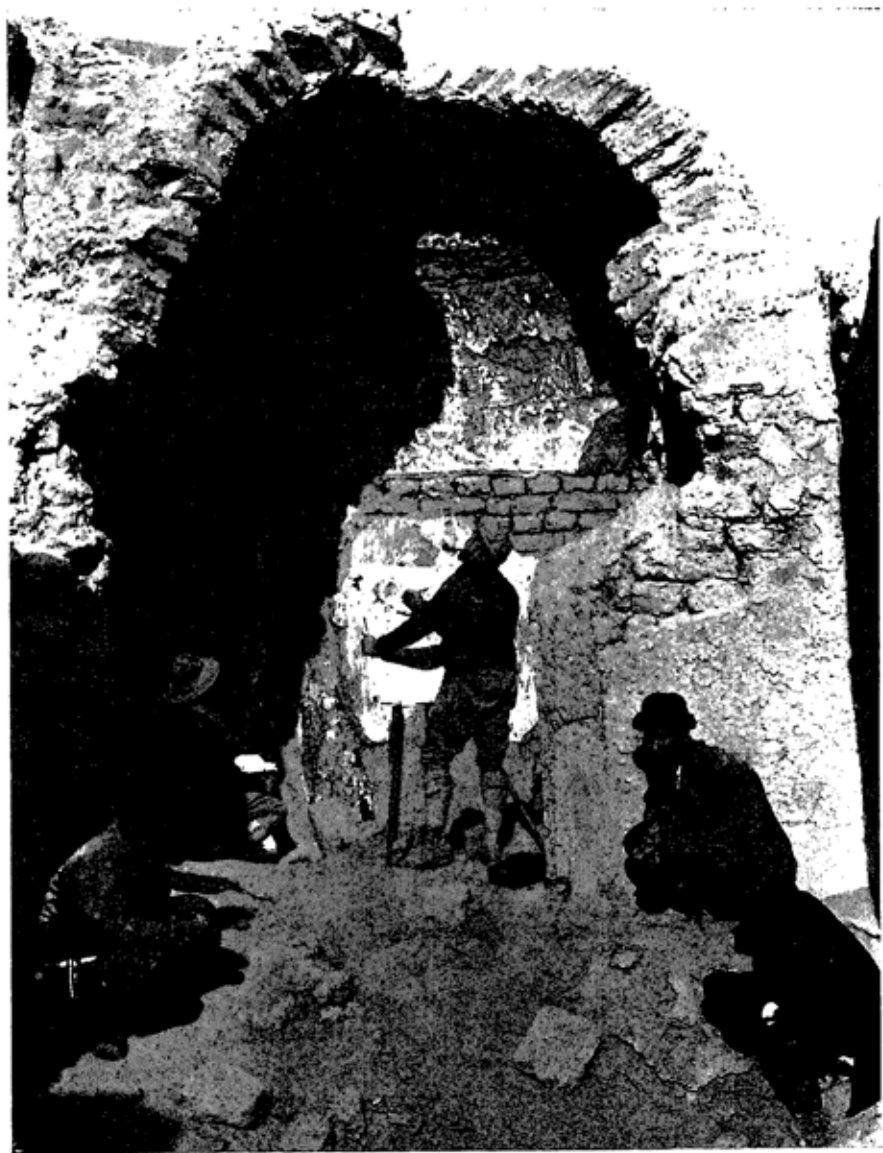
Comparison is specially instructive when we draw a parallel between the rock sanctuaries of Bamiyan and those at Qyzil, to which we referred earlier. In both there is the same eclecticism in the range of forms they use: the same combination of Greek and Indian elements, with a touch of Iranian influence which is clearly more prominent in Central Asia. The frescoes of Miran alluded to by J. Hackin were discovered by Sir Aurel Stein south of Lob-Nor and not far from Lou-lan where some very interesting research has also taken place.<sup>2</sup> They have even been attributed to a painter called Tita whose name would be a corruption of the typically Roman Titus. There is nothing surprising in the idea that a Roman painted the frescoes of Miran, but he would be a Roman of Greece or Syria; for the paintings date from the third or fourth centuries A.D., and their eastern character is quite pronounced.

The same feature is to be found at Bamiyan and can be seen in the copies made by Mme. Godard and exhibited at the Musée Guimet. Suggestions of Pompeii, the more grave and interior art of the catacombs, Persian miniatures and a marked Indian overtone are eloquent of the eclectic nature of this art. As it proceeds north, the clearly Hellenistic art of Gandhara takes on a more strongly Asiatic character. From this standpoint, Bamiyan offers a most interesting transitional stage between the Greek tendencies of India and the eclecticism of the Gobi oases. What is true of painting is true of decoration and architecture as well. "The most striking feature," writes M. René Dollot, the author of an interesting book on Afghanistan,<sup>3</sup> "is the graceful decoration of the caves surrounding the idols and rising away above the great Buddhas in the cliffside. Whilst the first ones hollowed out were plain, uncomplicated, rounded vaults, suggesting almost no knowledge at all of architectural arrangement, the last ones show the mark of much greater skill: ante-chambers, assembly halls, shrines and cells formed an organic whole. They were sometimes decorated with ceilings of false beams cut into the rock with wainscoting reminiscent of our own Renaissance ceilings; sometimes with domed ceilings on angle

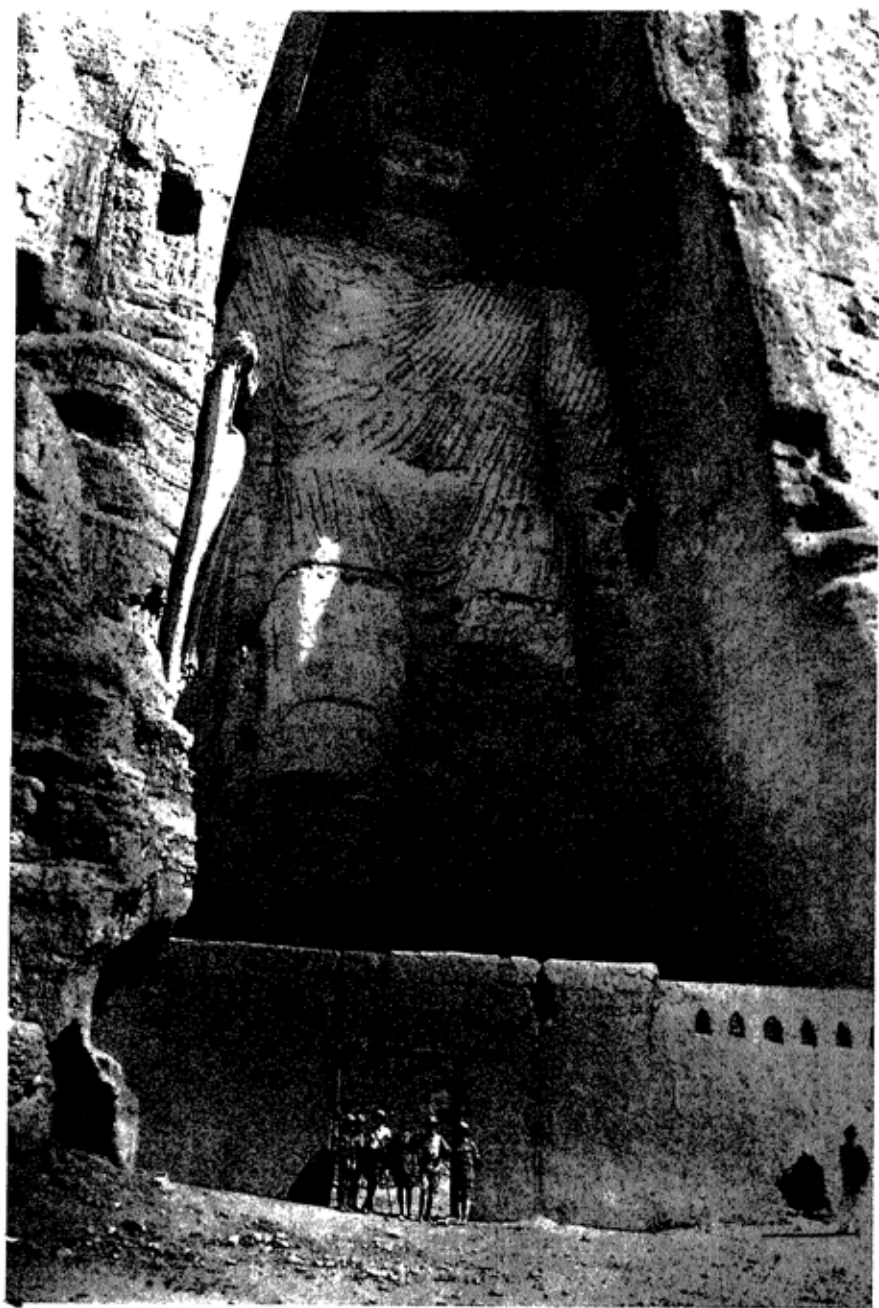
<sup>1</sup> *Antiquités bouddhiques de Bamiyan*, Paris, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> A. Hermann, *Lou-lan*, Leipzig, 1931.

<sup>3</sup> *L'Afghanistan*, Payot, Paris, 1937.



J. Hackin copying the frescoes of Bazaklik



The Great Buddha of Bamiyan

joists—an Iranian style which was quite unknown in Indian art. One assembly hall, with its irregular semi-circular arches, its side-ways, and its vault blackened with the soot of centuries long past, brings to mind some medieval chapter-house. . . . From sanctuaries of the third and fifth centuries A.D., we went on to others of the sixth and seventh; from the simplicity of early times to the triumph of decorative forms.”

The Iranian influence is particularly noticeable in the ceilings of caves 11 and 12, near to the Buddha which is 35 metres high, and in the lantern ceiling of the cave near to the Buddha of 53 metres. It is in the area of the giant statues that these sanctuaries open into the rock; they are made accessible by vertiginous little paths and stairways cut sometimes even in the hangings of the colossal images, making it possible to move about on them and examine at close quarters the beautiful paintings in their recesses. In this way, the figures surrounding Sakyamuni can be recognized indisputably as Persian or Syrian in origin; they are exemplified in the moon god which adorns the top of the vault above the head of the 35-metre Buddha (the “little Buddha”), and resembles, as Hackin has shown, Aglibol, the Moon god of Palmyra. The lesser beings who attend him are obviously Sassanid in style.

The group formed by the “little Buddha” and the sanctuaries round it is the oldest and dates from the second century A.D. “The 35-metre Buddha, with its thickset, heavy lines, was hewn out of the cliff-side. It was then given a clay coating to convey the folds of a monk’s robe. Its hair is wavy. There are still some traces of blue and red and the hands are missing. Technical defects to be found in the outline of the recess on its left-hand walls and the heavy lines of the image show conclusively that the 35-metre Buddha is earlier than the 53-metre one. The paintings at the top are the product of restoration at a much later date.”<sup>1</sup>

The hands are also missing from the 53-metre Buddha, and its face was doubtless mutilated, as we said before, to prevent the statue from coming to life and tormenting sleepers in the night. The troops of conquering armies fired at the smiling image of the Enlightened One, doing much damage to the coating which brought out the statue’s relief; it consisted of a combination of ropes and beams, covered with a clay and chopped straw mixture; this, in its turn, was also coated by a layer of lime. Modelling work on such an immense image must clearly have been a complicated operation, and we have to admire the artists of Bamiyan for their skill in combining the epic style of vast statues with the intricate and delicately finished decoration of the caves.

<sup>1</sup> *Le Site archéologique de Bamiyan*, Paris, 1934, p. 20.

The Great Buddha dates from the fifth or seventh century, which means that it was still new and its colours were still resplendent when the Chinese pilgrim Hiuan-Tsang, whose *travel diary* we quoted, marvelled at it in 632. Bamiyan's prosperity could not last much longer, however. Left intact by its Sassanid conquerors, who had even added to its wealth, this great religious centre earned the wrath of Moslem invaders, and from the middle of the seventh century the Arabs poured into the valley. The Korean pilgrim, Houei-tch'ao, who came to the monasteries about a century after Hiuan-Tsang, does not appear to have noticed any outstanding destruction, and another hundred years passed before Buddhist supremacy came to an end.

Iranian and Hindu influences are combined in curious proportions in the paintings round the Great Buddha. At times, the figures which are portrayed—the gift-bearers, the Bodhisattvas with their retinues of servants, warriors and musicians—embody every aspect of the composite art we have described. "The paintings that decorate the recess of this immense statue do not show any unity of style. The upper section of the work above the offsets includes a number of tablets in which the themes are still strongly influenced by Indian art; everything below the offsets, on the other hand, shows a marked Iranian influence. These paintings are for the most part damaged. By standing on the head of the Great Buddha, at the top of the vault one can see finely shaped Bodhisattvas with almond eyes, lissome arms and long supple fingers. With aureoles or haloes over their heads, the Bodhisattvas are unconstrained in posture, they make mystic signs with their hands, and the lower parts of their bodies are covered by *dhotis* (loincloths). All the figures wear bracelets, necklaces and pendant ear-rings. Close to one of the Bodhisattvas there is a woman with a slender shape and large breasts; on her arms she wears two bracelets. She is bending gracefully towards the Bodhisattva and her outstretched fingers are probably making an offering. Bodhisattvas appear once again on the lateral walls and are separated from one another by beaded columns. The upper halves of female figures appear from the abacus above each capital. They partially conceal the beginning of the stairs of a stupa, the Dome of which can be clearly seen. Among the figures shown in this way, two female music-makers and gift-bearers with the upper parts of their bodies bare are particularly striking."

There are many other interesting sites which have been visited by the Commission since 1932: the Buddhist sanctuaries of Kakrak, for example, which are grouped round a statue 10 metres high; the prehistoric site of Tchebel Soutoun, and the strongholds of Shar-

i-ulohak and Shar-Khoshak which the Mongols of Genghis Khan destroyed.

We do not intend to enumerate all the sites which the archaeologists of the French Commission have explored, excavated or restored. We shall only refer to the main ones—and the Temple of Kair-Khaneh in particular, which has proved of immense significance. The discovery is supremely important in the archaeological and religious history of Afghanistan; whilst the other buildings found here were Buddhist (or Moslem if they were of a later date), for the first time we find a Brahmanist sanctuary. Kair-Khaneh is twelve kilometres to the north-west of Kabul on the route which connected India to Central Asia; built on a rocky spur, this rich group of sanctuaries looked out over one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. It is assumed that the temple was dedicated to a sun god, and this assumption is borne out by the fine white marble statue which was found there. J. Hackin has shown a picture of it in the volume of *Mémoires de la Délégation* which he devoted to the excavations at Kair-Khaneh.<sup>1</sup> When considered as a work of art, this image of the god sitting in a horse-drawn chariot appears to be partially Iranian and partially Indian in inspiration. None the less, there is no difficulty in recognizing that the apparent influence it reflects of a Zoroastrian cult is less important than its resemblance to the image of the Hindu god Surya.

As far as the plan of the temple itself is concerned, it is quite different from anything found in Afghanistan hitherto, and is very much more like the Sivaite temple of Bhumara in the north of India. Kair-Khaneh, which seems to have escaped the full impact of Graeco-Buddhist influence, was essentially a centre dominated by the cult of the Sun God. As this cult was common to the Persians and Hindus, it is not surprising to find a new combination of Gupta imagery and Iranian style. Afghanistan was always a sphere of artistic and religious ferment but at Kair-Khaneh it assumed a new character in which Brahmanist India outweighed Buddhist India and Zoroastrian Persia prevailed over Alexandrian Greece.

After the excavations at Kair-Khaneh, the archaeologists began work on the tumuli of Tapa-i-Saka, containing the ruins of a stronghold which dated from the period of the Arsacids and showed the characteristics of Iranian military architecture. At Siyah Sang in 1933, M. Carl found an important Buddhist sanctuary. The ruins of this monastery contained the superb statue of a Bodhisattva. As it was such a delicate piece of work, the archaeologists found themselves faced with the problem of how to strengthen it sufficiently to transport it without causing it damage. (We feel we should

<sup>1</sup> *Recherches archéologiques au col de Kair-Khaneh*, Paris, 1937.

mention that most of the ancient relics found in Afghanistan are in the Museum at Dar-ul-Aman, but quite a large number are in the Musée Guimet in Paris where there are excellent facilities for studying this art in all its aspects.) M. Carl had the ingenious idea of hollowing out the statue and replacing the fragile clay with a mixture of plaster and tow strengthened with pieces of wood. As a result, the statue was able to make the difficult journey without accident. Interesting pottery and a remarkable collection of Sassanid coins were also found among the remains of Siyah Sang.

Sassanid influences were in evidence once again in the ruins of Dokhtar-i-Noshirvan (which Hackin excavated in 1924) and further indicated the supremacy of Persian art. This is chiefly made apparent in a collection of paintings, the technique and style of which show a direct relationship with Iranian culture. Hindu art and the composite art of Hellenist Central Asia again form a remarkable alliance with Iranian art in the ruins of Habak. The site of valuable discoveries by Foucher, it was on the route to Turkestan and therefore fully exposed to every outside influence.

In Seistan, which was explored by Sir Aurel Stein, Hackin was at the head of several expeditions leading to the discovery of new sites. The most noteworthy was Qualeh-i-Kang, where M. Girshman found polychrome painted pottery, influenced by that of Iran and chiefly showing the stylistic features of Tepe Moussian and Tepe Giyan. This site is probably one of the oldest in Afghanistan since its most ancient relics go back to the first millennium B.C., and it is not impossible that later excavations, by penetrating to deeper layers, may find remains from the first period of Susa. It can, at all events, already be deduced that Persian influence was in evidence in very early times.

It probably lasted up to the Arab invasion in the seventh century; then the Mongols swept the country, which always adjusted itself to the devastation it suffered. But in the fourteenth century, Tamurlain destroyed the wonderful irrigation system which had kept it fertile and protected it from the everlasting menace of sand borne by violent winds. This area, which had been the intermediary between the civilizations of Mesopotamia and the Indus as far back as the second millennium, was eaten away by drought and became the barren desert we know today.

The ruins of Tar-o-Sar, where there is evidence of a fortress in Iranian style, contain some comparatively recent Moslem work and very ancient remains which have not yet been fully cleared. At this site, provided that the buildings have not crumbled away under the force of the wind, the archaeologist can retrace the

passage of the different civilizations which succeeded one another in Afghanistan.

In Fondoukistan, the Hindu and Buddhist emphasis reappears in a large collection of statues dating from the sixth and seventh centuries and contemporary with the second period of Bamiyan.

When examined, the results of the French Commission's research reveal in Afghanistan, as indeed in Central Asia, the same religious and artistic syncretism which typifies the great cross-roads where many civilizations met. Today, everything we know of the civilization and art of these regions indicates a blending of styles in which extraordinary eclecticism is the culminating point. At Qyzil there are obvious Hindu and Sassanid influences and even some striking imitations of the Ajanta frescoes; in the oasis of Dandan-tuliq "Beside a nagi of purely Indian type like one of the most lissome nudes of Ajanta, are a horseman and a camel-driver—both clearly Iranian—and a bearded bodhisattva, a coronet on his head and dressed in a long green cassock with trousers and boots, who can only be a Sassanid lord." And Grousset concludes: "Hence, before the country was conquered by Turkish peoples in the second half of the eighth century, the Indo-European oases to the north and south of Tarim—from Yarkand and Khotan to Lob-nor, from Kashgar, Kusha and Karashar to Turfan—were culturally dependent, not on the Altai and the civilization of the steppes, but on the great civilizations of India and Persia. They were extensions of India and Persia taken right up to the Chinese frontier. Through them, furthermore, India and Persia made their entry into China: this is evidenced in the frescoes and Buddhist banners found by the expeditions of Pelliot and Aurel Stein near to Tuen-huang, where the silk route entered the present day Chinese province of Kan-sou." M. Jean Carl uncovered the ruins of a Buddhist monastery rich in mural paintings and statues, all of which showed remarkable eclecticism. Here once again, as at Turfan, Qyzil and Kumchuk, we find Hindu and Iranian styles cutting across one another. Sassanid coins found on this site appear to have provided originals for the faces of certain princes. All this is superimposed on a Graeco-Buddhist tradition which antedates the frescoes and sculpture of the monasteries by two centuries. If religious syncretism is apparent, it is because Buddhism and Brahmanism lived side by side; the Chinese pilgrims of the eighth century were already drawing attention to the many heretics in the Buddhist ecclesiastical capitals of Bamiyan and Hadda. The marble statue of Kair-Khaneh, as the image of a sun god, shows both Hindu and Iranian elements; and the early Buddhists did not shrink from borrowing those forms in Greek art which harmonized so perfectly with the expression of



Hindu piety. As M. Foucher has put it, "No country has witnessed the passage of so many different peoples nor had to submit to so many masters. Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Parthians, Kushans, Huns, Turks, Arabs and Mongols successively invaded Afghanistan and established themselves there because they recognized the strategic importance of the formidable barrier rising in the Hindu-Kush between India and Central Asia." Many have ruled over these hills and valleys which are now almost completely desolate: Darius, Alexander, the Seleucid Satraps, the kings of the Graeco-Bactrians and Graeco-Indians, the khans Cakas (who were driven out by the Yue-tchi), Parthian governors, the Kushan kings, Persian governors, the petty kings of the Hepthalites, right down to Mahmoud the Ghaznevid and Babour the Mongol. Every wave of invaders left something of themselves in the soil of Afghanistan. Their legacy probably still lies undiscovered for the most part beneath the sand which shrouds palaces and monasteries; for only those in the hills or in the cliff sides were to escape it.

Syncretism in Afghanistan did not, as so often happens, rest content with the mere repetition of alien forms; it may even have given rise to new religious concepts—though it is more difficult for us to be sure of this. It was possible for the meeting between Greece and India to produce a new philosophy as well as a new art. The contact of Persia with China was no less salutary: it brought different ideas and, above all, a new aesthetic system to be absorbed in the Graeco-Buddhist *mélange* which was the aftermath of Alexander's victories.

Sir Aurel Stein concluded from research in Seistan and Baluchistan that there was at least comparative unity between the prehistoric civilizations of Southern and Central Asia. At a very early time, even before Bactria became the melting-pot for so many cultures, close relations bound settled peoples and the nomadic tribes who passed through their territories, bringing them the ideas and forms of the countries they came from. These relations were later to be strengthened still further when active trade flourished through the passes of the Hindu-Kush.

In this respect Afghanistan is certainly one of the countries holding most surprises for us, and Sir Aurel Stein held with justification that it was there we should seek the sources—or at least one of the most important ones—of the great prehistoric civilization whose traces were found subsequently at Sumer and Mohenjjo-Daro. The excavations carried out by French archaeologists in particular, and the research of Mr. Wheeler, Director-General of Indian

Archaeology, during his expedition in 1946,<sup>1</sup> provide abundant proof of the many different cultures that succeeded one another in Afghanistan from prehistoric times to the Moslem invasions. In a region which has been barely explored, the wealth of its archaeological sites is far from exhausted; in the coming years we shall undoubtedly witness discoveries which will confirm what Sir Aurel Stein intuitively believed.

<sup>1</sup> See *Antiquity* (June 1947), a study of the *tepes* lying between Bahkh and Akcha, especially Nimlik Tapa and Pareshan Tapa; in the first of these M. Schlumberger had already found, some years back, a vase with Greek lettering. This is the most ancient Greek inscription ever found in Bactria.

## CHAPTER II

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN INDOCHINA

IN THE melting-pot of Indochina, at least three sources of civilization allowed their yields to mingle and unite. It is fruitless to talk of indigenous art or original culture in a country which never created forms or ideas at any time in its history; but the way in which Indochina received, used, assimilated and digested what was brought is in itself a kind of creation, and the mark it imposed on its work, however obvious its borrowings or outside influences might be, gives it a genuine and distinctive identity.

The really interesting thing in Indochinese art, particularly in its architecture and sculpture, is not where it shows the influence of the Hindu, Polynesian or Chinese originals which inspired it, nor where it resembles them; on the contrary—it is what constitutes its real individuality and makes it different. When once we have distinguished all the borrowings and influences, there will still be a great deal to admire, and the essential features of Indonesian art are in themselves sufficient to stimulate the archaeologist and student of beauty. We should also add that the work done in this area by the *Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* is one of the finest archaeological achievements of our time.

There is still a great deal to be done. Even the most extensively explored areas have not yet yielded all their secrets. Angkor, the best known site of all, buildings from which have been reconstructed at exhibitions, is now so easily accessible that tourists can make an excursion to it where only a short time ago it necessitated an arduous expedition. But even Angkor's remains have not been fully cleared, and very beautiful ruins have frequently been uncovered from the forest undergrowth which concealed them.

Here as in Central America, the archaeologist's task is not to uncover dead cities buried under layers of sand or in mounds of earth; buildings in this part of the world do not have protective layers to shield them from the weather. Sand dunes keep intact whatever they cover, and dryness preserves fabrics and wooden objects. In Indochina, humidity destroyed whatever it touched and abundant tropical forest won its battle with stone by breaking up the houses which men had abandoned. Trees grew over the temples, which were reduced to unrecognizable heaps by rotting foliage and

decay. Stout roots broke up their terraces and threw down their walls; a relentless plant overgrowth proved stronger than stone.

Archaeologists do not come here with the same tools they use on the sites of Mesopotamia. It is not earth that they must contend with but forest, and their first task is to remove the overgrowth before the buildings they find can be restored. So far we have only spoken of ruins that died a death through natural causes. There were many others that suffered at the hands of men before natural decay could begin, and quite often the temples were already in ruins before the forest could reclaim them.

An undertaking of this kind obviously calls for tenacity, selflessness and untiring effort. Restoring life to the dead cities of Indochina was no easy matter, and all the sites cleared show signs of the many natural obstacles that archaeologists had to overcome before they could begin to study them and reveal their secrets.

The problems of dating the remains of Angkor and determining the reasons for which they were built are difficult ones and have been the subject of much discussion. They are clearly focused by M. G. Coedès, the Honorary Director of the *Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*, in his exceptional book, *For a Better Understanding of Angkor*.<sup>1</sup> In 1928 the former curator of Angkor said that the temple and the remains connected with it in the religious complex centred round Bayon were built during the reign of Jayavarman II—the first half of the ninth century. On the other hand, M. Madrolle in the English edition of his guide declared that it was built by Jayavarman VII who reigned at the end of the twelfth century. These examples give some idea of the controversy which the centre of Bayon has aroused. By studying the style and technique of inscriptions, M. G. Coedès has placed the building of Bayon in the twelfth century. Taking his criteria from epigraphy, archaeology and the history of art, he has determined dates which seem quite indisputable unless completely new information comes to light. He shows that the temples of Ruolos, Phnom Bakheng and Kohker go back to the ninth century, Pre Rup and Banteai Srei to the tenth century, Angkor Vat to the first half of the twelfth. "These remains," he writes, "were the work of a Hindu civilization transplanted in Indochina. But this should not blind us to certain original features in Khmer art which distinguish it from its forbears; it has a genuine originality, and the most obvious reason for this is that the craftsmen who built and decorated Khmer temples were themselves Khmers; they undoubtedly had ancient artistic traditions of their own which were alien to those of India. Nevertheless, if we disregard plastic form

<sup>1</sup> *Pour mieux comprendre Angkor*, published by Maisonneuve, 1947.

and look for the creative power from which inspiration was derived, we find that it was Indian."

The question now arises whether the stone remains of Angkor were palaces or temples. They were plainly temples, for even rulers lived in wooden buildings; but in a sense they *were* the abode of the king, for the sovereign power who dwelt in them was a God-king. These immense temple complexes were filled with statues which were at once the likenesses of the kings of heaven and the kings of the earth. In their general arrangement they represented the dwelling of the gods and an earthly counterpart of Mount Meru. The religion of the Khmers was closely allied to Brahmanism and later to Buddhism, and Mount Meru was the Olympus of the Hindu mythology by which it was inspired. "They are temples," writes Coedès, "because they housed the images of gods; if there was a funeral cult (for those to whom prayer was addressed were dead), it was divine none the less in its veneration of devas, and bodhisattvas, and in admitting the ritual act of moving to the right." It is known that moving to the left was reserved for funeral rites. Both a tomb and a temple, Angkor, when compared with the funeral temples of Bali and Java, can aptly be described in the words of M. G. Coedès—"the last abode of a being who enjoyed divine privileges in life and at last achieves godhead in death. It is the funeral palace where his mortal remains were laid to rest, and where his statue arose to reveal him as a god."

A number of other lesser known themes also call for our attention—particularly the problems which have developed round the study of prehistoric remains in Indochina, the curious megaliths of Laos, the capitals of the kingdom of Champa (about which we still know so little), and the characteristics of Cham art. The *Bulletin de l'Ecole française de l'Extrême-Orient* in which the results of all archaeological research in Indochina have been reported, also contains a wealth of valuable documents which are placed at the disposal of the expert and the amateur alike. *Praehistorica Asiae Orientalis*, *Indochine*, *Asia Major*, *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, the *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué*, the *Revue des Arts asiatiques*, etc., are other publications which give all the information that could be required on all these subjects.

Knowledge of prehistoric Indochina became available with the discovery of neolithic remains in Samrong Sen. Patient, methodical research has brought to light some extremely interesting information on the neolithic civilization which appears to have spread all over Indochina. M. Gaspardone, who was then studying this civilization, wrote in 1936, "It spread sporadically over the whole country; eclipsed in Tonkin, weak in Annam, and flourishing in Laos and Camboëia, it achieved its zenith in Samrong Sen. Its characteristic

features were hafted stone axes, developed pottery craft, and the first objects in bronze. A civilization of the plains, arising after the formation of deltas, it often remained oblivious to the shelter which mountains offered it. It was the classic culture of prehistoric times in the South Seas." Recent excavations have provided a body of information enabling us to determine the order, if not the dates, of the different neolithic civilizations which succeeded one another in Indochina. The first one, called "Hoabinhian" because it was originally observed in the province of Hoa-binh in Tonkin, has yielded almost no pottery, but interesting stone implements—particularly unifacial axe-blades. The sites of Ratuburi and Chieng Ray in Siam, of Perak and Gua Kerbau in Malaya, and of Luang Prabang in Laos have produced similar implements. From the "Bacsonian" civilization (called after the mountain site of Bac-son in Tonkin) have come pottery of the *basket* type, bone implements and polished edged axes.

To the question, "Of which race were the earliest inhabitants of Indochina?", M. Coedès has answered in the following terms: "The human remains found on Hoabinhian and Bacsonian sites show features of the Australian and Papu-Melanesian races. On the other hand, those found with large numbers of flakes and microliths (also observed in Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Celebes) seem to be of Negrito and Veddoid origin."<sup>1</sup>

We are chiefly indebted to Mlle. Madelaine Colani and M. Paul Lévy for the knowledge we have today of palaeolithic civilization in Indochina; to Mlle. Colani for her work on Hoabinhian and Bacsonian sites from 1927 to 1943 and to M. Lévy for his excavations in Mlu Prei in 1938, and in Laos in 1940, when he discovered the first palaeolithic layer at Luang-Prabang—"the first layer of its kind—bearing in mind its topography and geographic situation—ever to be found in Indochina. Man has always lived here since the time when his only implements were roughly hewn stones—which he used, nevertheless, for widely different purposes." In 1942, in the area of Ban Vang on the Mekong, right in the Keng Chan rapids, M. Lévy found palaeolithic sites which were "identical, where materials and methods of workmanship were concerned, with those in the Luang-Prabang layer, 400 metres to the north."<sup>2</sup>

Implements of the mesolithic type (the transitional stage before the neolithic) were brought into Indochina by an unidentified people who also settled in Malaya, Siam, Sumatra, Japan and the Philippines. Neolithic tools were brought by other newcomers whom M. G. Coedès recognizes as Indonesians, "now forming the greater

<sup>1</sup> *Les Etats hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie*, De Boccard, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Report by the *Académie des Inscriptions*, 1946.

part of the population of outer India. Advanced as it was in pottery, with patterns that are sometimes reminiscent of ancient Chinese and western motifs, neolithic civilization did not vanish with the introduction of metals; it might almost be said that its spirit has remained alive among certain backward peoples in the mountains and interior."

Other, more perplexing, features have been brought to light by excavations: ethnographically, for example, they show that a number of races lived in Indochina in prehistoric times. Melanesian, negrito, Indonesian and Papuan skulls have been found, thereby lending weight even to the boldest theories on how Indochina became inhabited. It was a kind of migratory cross-roads where all the races swarming from America into Polynesia, from Polynesia into Asia, and perhaps even from Africa and Asia Minor, came into contact with one another.

Little was known of palaeolithic times until 1930, when layers of that period were subjected to examination. The remains found were of a prehistoric civilization whose distinguishing mark was the stone axe with a single polished cutting edge. "This was the cave civilization of Tonkin: a civilization of cave-dwellers, it would seem, living within reach of volcanic rock from which they made their implements and weapons. Cut off from the west, so we are told, by the Annam coastal range, they skirted the inner edge of the deltas with the narrow limestone strips to the north-east and south-west of the Red River, and vanished with them in the heart of Annam; they reappeared in Siam, Perak and the Philippines. . . . But quaternary man, whose rightful place is between *Sinanthropus* of Peking and *Pithecanthropus* of Java, still crops up in Indochina. Prehistory, like history, was backward in this part of the world."<sup>1</sup>

Research on prehistoric Indochina, which has been summarized in M. A. Mansuy's excellent *La Préhistoire en Indochine*,<sup>2</sup> shows the diversity of sources on which its civilization drew. What we said of multiple influences in its art can also be applied to its ethnography; the different techniques and aesthetic tendencies which reached Indochina were brought by peoples from very remote regions. No one can say why they left them—perhaps they were driven out by widespread floods—but their migration was as important as the *Volkerwanderungen* which led to modern European civilization; it too brought the seed of civilization to barbarous or previously uninhabited areas. M. G. Coedès shows that, at some time during the neolithic period, a division occurred between those who favoured the concave triangular or semi-circular axe characteristic of the

<sup>1</sup> *Fouilles d'Indochine, Revue de Paris*, 1st December, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Macon, 1931.

Indonesian peoples, and those who preferred the hafted axe which was peculiar to the Austro-Asiatic family and was probably introduced by a new wave of immigrants or invaders who were either mongoloid in race or subjected to mongol influence.

In our previous volume, we outlined the different theories which have been advanced in order to explain the origins of *American man*.<sup>1</sup> *Chinese man* has also been the subject of very curious hypotheses, and where *Indochinese man* is concerned, Dr. Paul Rivet, an authority on comparative ethnography, has put forward some extremely bold and compelling ideas. In dealing with this vast subject, he brings his poetic intuition into play and confirms its findings by scientific analysis. We still have a great deal to learn about neolithic man in Asia and America, but new discoveries will no doubt eventually fill the gaps in our knowledge.

Daring arguments can also be advanced about the period sometimes called the *megalithic age*; we shall study the characteristics of it in Peru. "The implements found with them place the megaliths scattered all over outer India in what is already the age of metals—protohistoric times. The oldest, with which bronze is found to the exclusion of iron, are the dolmens of eastern Java. These, in the course of their evolution, gave rise to the sarcophagi of Bali. Dolmens and vaults (Central Java, Southern Sumatra, Perak), monolith jars (Upper Laos), menhirs (Upper Laos, Malaya, Sumatra, Java)—all are funeral monuments connected with the cult of ancestors and dead chiefs. This fact has inspired some of the most daring theories."<sup>2</sup> The manifestations of megalithic civilization in Asia, Europe and America show similar characteristics, and dolmens have been found in India, Brittany and North Africa. This would suggest that at some time in the history of human evolution, certain levels of civilization were almost universally attained. It could be postulated from this that the world was inhabited during these periods by a single race with a uniform culture, or again, that migration over many centuries conveyed forms and ideas from one continent to another. But would it not, on the whole, be preferable to conclude that all human civilization must necessarily pass through certain stages in the course of its normal development? From this it would follow that the megalithic age was one of those "moments" in the history of culture which all peoples must live through. No one has been able to say why—probably at the dictate of a Law of Constants

<sup>1</sup> The fullest and most recent work on this subject is Professor Rivet's *Les Origines de l'homme américain*, Gallimard, 1957.

<sup>2</sup> M. G. Coedès, *Les Etats hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie*, De Boccard, 1948. These theories can be found in W. J. Perry's interesting book, *The Children of the Sun*, 1927.



within the human psyche. Powerful as it is in aesthetics, it may also have been important in the ethnography and formal development of civilization.

In an earlier work, I wrote that—"These constants may arise if, for example, climate or the nature of the soil necessitates the use of certain materials. But so far from being the outcome of physical needs alone, the choice of materials is also bound up with mental constructions in the collective complex of a race when it prefers wood to stone or pottery to fabric, regardless of their convenience or use, and in response to the psycho-physiological tendencies by which it is determined. In addition to these *horizontal constants*, which derive from the static condition of the complex, there are others, no less specific, which we shall call *vertical* or dynamic. We can define them if we say that, in given circumstances, a creative aesthetic complex of this kind will attain and choose to enter the pottery or fabric stage, despite all the available material resources which might influence the choice. It can be assumed that man, in his most general essence, if confronted with the most general phenomena, will react in exactly the same way where differences of time and place create varying inflections but not radical antinomies. These inflections will design different patterns on an identical weave, and the patterns will also conform with the law of constants in so far as, in similar circumstances, they will produce more or less similar forms—whatever interval of distance or time there may be between their environments. These environments, themselves conditioned by laws of frequency, will produce a quite limited number of distinctive types—not according to the illusory hypothetical determinism of a *perennial reversion*, which is almost beyond proof, but in obedience rather to the law of the human psyche in motion which compels it to keep passing through certain points; since these are also in motion, they always appear as similar combinations against a different background. From this it follows that, biologically, the outline cannot be exactly the same every time, just as the constants of race and habitat determine a uniform type among human beings, though no two of them are ever identical."<sup>1</sup>

In *Die Heilige Urschrift der Menschheit*,<sup>2</sup> Hermann Wirth shows that the *solar-bark*, which is depicted as the vehicle of the dead in the underworld, appears in the rock carvings of Scandinavia, the tumuli of Ireland, in Oceania, in California and in Spain. Taking this as an example, we are not obliged to conclude that these illustrations are necessarily the interpretation by different peoples of the original

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Brion, *L'Esthétique et les constantes de l'esprit humain*. Second International Congress of Aesthetics, Alcan, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Leipzig, 1931.

Egyptian ship of the dead. It would be more reasonable to suppose that all seafaring races, at a stage when they did not have mythology or religion, interpreted the movement of the sun—with its alternating periods of day and night—as its descent into a world underground. As they watched the sun rise and sink back into the sea, they imagined that a river must flow beneath the world, and that, like themselves, the sun used a ship to go on its voyage.

The problem of death became associated with the voyage of the sun, for its daily rebirth gave man hope that he too would be reborn. If a man follows the same route as the sun when he dies, it is reasonable to suppose that he has the same chance of returning. In the minds of primitive peoples, it was natural to conclude that the souls of the dead should journey in the sun-ship of rebirth. The many forms of this recurring theme—from Osiris' ship to the long-boats in which Vikings were buried with their weapons and horses—more readily suggest the necessary wealth of the mind's spontaneous products than a single mysteriously transmitted original.

Probably something very much the same happened with the megalithic civilization, of which remains have been found from the Mediterranean to Sweden, from Spain to the Crimea, and which also occur in Syria, Korea and Japan. Some writers hold that megaliths are the landmarks of the Aryan advance towards northern Europe, whilst others like Kranse maintain on the contrary that they point the way of the Aryans' movements from northern Europe to the very limits of their expansion. W. J. Perry connects them with the exploiting of mine layers and pearl-beds.<sup>1</sup> Be that as it may, it is intriguing to consider the megaliths in Indochina, especially those in Laos on which Mlle. M. Colani has written a remarkable study. Her excavations in Upper Laos from 1931 to 1939 afford us a unique insight into megalithic culture. In 1940, Mlle. Colani found vast fields of monolith jars at Song-Meng, at an altitude of 1,200 metres in the province of Tran-Ninh, where a large number had already been discovered. They were "decorated with animal images on their lower surface or with a large disk, sometimes engraved with a human or ape-like head. In the earth beside them there were also some very small animal statuettes in stone with a clay coating."<sup>2</sup> M. Gaspar-done writes in a summary of her discoveries:

"In Upper Laos, the ancient caravan route, which became the colonial road from Xieng Khuang to Luang-Prabang, passes first through a plain region dotted with coniferous trees, which alternates with savannah and ends in forest. Though it was once

<sup>1</sup> See *The Growth of Civilization*, London, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient de 1940 à 1945*, Saigon.

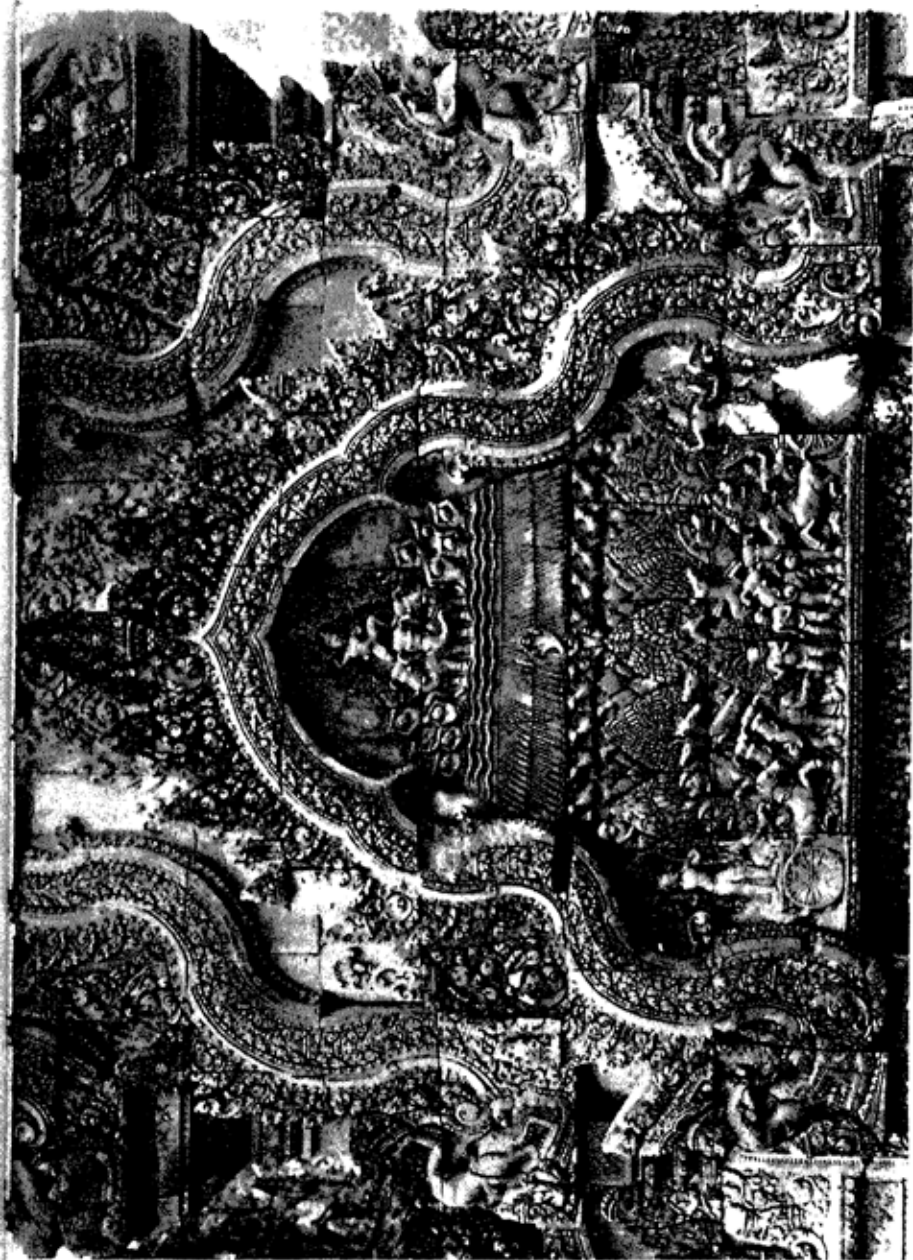
inhabited, it now has only a very few remaining villages and curious groups of enormous delicate stone disks and jars, spread out over large intervals and planted in the earth on small hills. These monoliths, the largest of which each weigh fifteen tons and can take ten men standing, have been called the jars of Tran Ninh by travellers in this area. The natives have accounted for them with legends. A residue of carbonaceous mud, teeth and bone fragments found in them indicated to Mlle. Colani that the fields of jars were burial grounds; they had been ravaged but were found to contain stone tools, glass beads, bronze bells and bracelets, and iron knives and rings. At Ban Ang, a large cave had served as a crematorium—possibly as early as neolithic times. In the north-west, towards Mekong, erect stones gradually replace the jars, and the bones are buried in coarse clay urns. The stones were cut with geometric lines for decoration; on some blocks there is the rough relief of a crouching animal or a man. Sometimes a large table with cup-shaped hollows suggests that it was used for sacrifice. In the province of Houan-Pan to the north-east, menhirs lean over scattered schist disks, or almost empty trenches. Bronze and glass have been introduced into almost all of these tombs. It is still not possible to reach any conclusion about their age or the people who built them, though they may well point the way to a period in its decline. It is already clear that they are not the only megaliths in Indochina, and there is growing evidence of their relationship with the remains in Sumatra and the Celebes. Indochina has its place in the study of megaliths in the Pacific and in the enigma of megaliths all over the world."<sup>1</sup>

The petroglyph civilization is an equally fascinating enigma and a comparative study in this field would also prove valuable. Petroglyphs have been found all over the world; in India at Mahadeo, in America at a number of different sites, and in Africa and Europe where they abound. M. Goloubew found some in Indochina in August 1925, in the region of Chapa, south-east of Lao-Kay, in Upper Tonkin, and they proved specially interesting. In his comments on this discovery, René Grousset wrote,<sup>2</sup> "There were two granite rocks and a number of graffiti bearing pictographic designs and characters which have still not been identified. On some of these stones there appears to be the plan of a city with houses and rivers. No one knows when or by whom this work was done but the problem is an interesting one and we are indebted to M. Goloubew for having taken impressions from these rocks—about which he has written, incidentally, in volume XXV of the *Bulletin*."

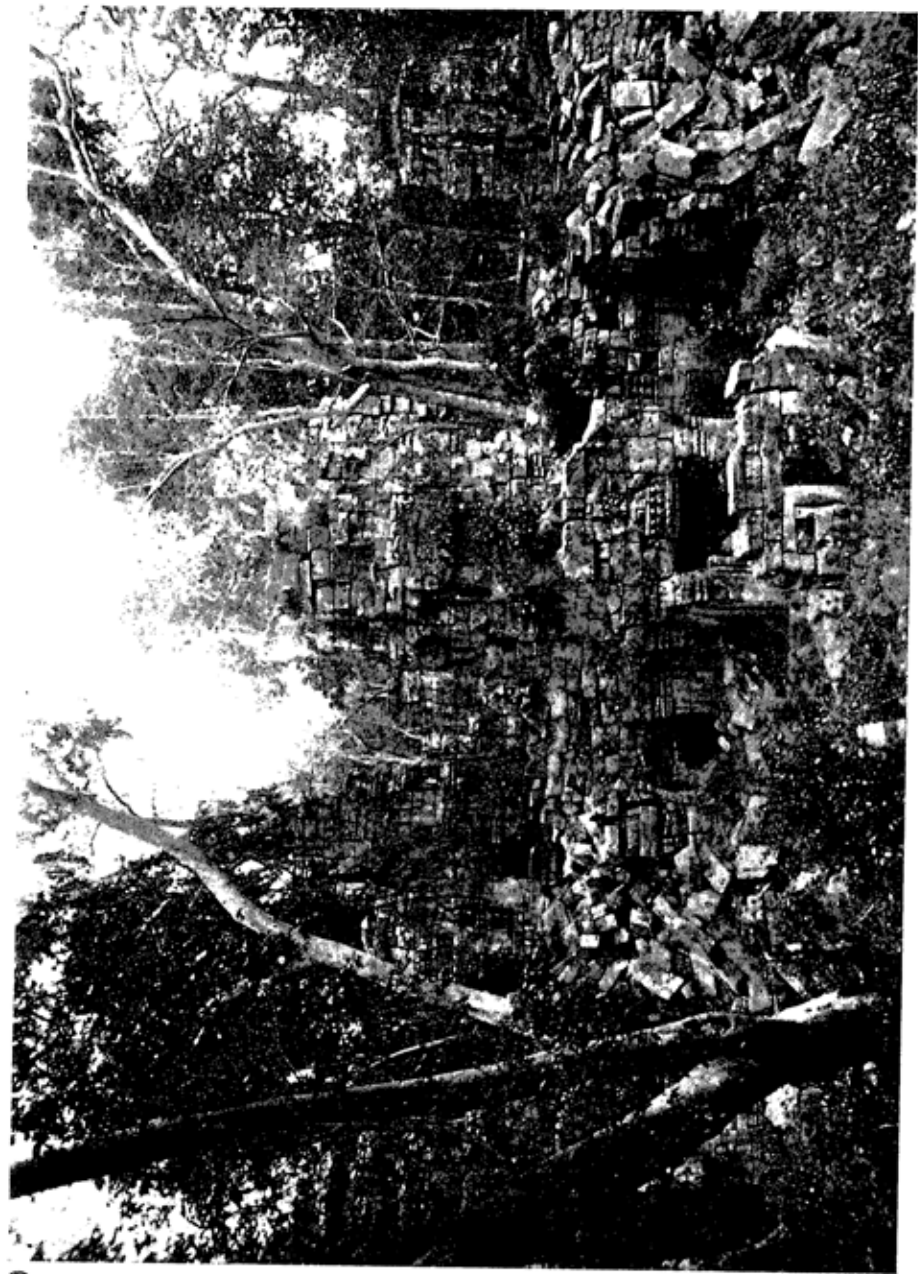
M. Goloubew has also done some exceptional work in Tonkin and in northern Annam on the bronze or Dongsonian age, as it has

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 620.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue des arts asiatiques*, June 1926, p. 65.



Sculpture at Banteai Srei



Ruins of Banteai Chmar

been called, which came only a few centuries before Christian times. M. Karlgren has actually placed the civilization of Dong-son in the fourth century B.C., whilst M. Van Stein Callenfels attributes it to the sixth or seventh. "In most cases," says M. G. Coedès, "no transitional stage was found between the remains of a delayed neolithic civilization and the earliest Hindu remains. On the coast of Annam and in Cambodia, nothing occurs between the neolithic sites of Sa-huynh, Samrong Sen and the megalith of Xuanloc on one hand, and the earliest relics in Champa and Cambodia on the other. The Hindu centres of Oc-Eo (Cochin China) and Kuala Selinsing (Perak in Malaya), were the sources of a number of seals, engraved with Sanskrit names in writing of the second to fifth centuries; they also yielded polished stone tools. In Celebes, a bronze Buddha of the school of Amaravati was found at Sempaga above a neolithic site."

In the same way, there was the astonishing discovery at Oc-Eo of a native population, still in the stone age, living side by side with an immense wealth of jewels, coins, medallions, intaglios and cameos.

The very simple explanation for this is that, like the trading port of Arikamedu in Pondicherry (where a great number of Roman, Iranian and Egyptian objects from the first centuries of the Christian era were also discovered), Oc-Eo was a market for the produce of both the West and the East; it was one of those international ports where, just as in modern Hong-Kong or Shanghai, powerful foreign traders enjoyed what were virtually full concessions. (The "Roman quarter" in Arikamedu even had its own temples and possibly theatres.) The site of Oc-Eo was excavated by M. Malleret. Situated on the Gulf of Siam in Cochin China and what was once Maritime Cambodia, it seems from the air "like an enormous rectangle of about three kilometres by 1,500 metres—an area of more than four hundred hectares." The town was divided by canals. Today it is about twenty-five kilometres from the shore but at the beginning of Christian times it was a maritime city, connected to the sea by its outer harbour. It is the most important of the new archaeological sites which M. Malleret has identified in the province of Chaudoc alone. The treasures extracted by modern archaeologists from these ruins, which have been ransacked for centuries, are eloquent proof of the prosperity of a town which was founded by Hindu merchants in a region where the natives were still in the neolithic stage of civilization. It is for this reason that finely finished specimens of European and Hindu art, Hellenist intaglios and Roman glass beads, are found side by side with primitive pottery and polished stone axes.

In 1944, M. Malleret showed that there were two archaeological levels in the ruins of Oc-Eo: one of brick buildings of a type hitherto unknown in Indochina, and the other of houses on piles, some of which were found still in position. This discovery, which "shed an unexpected light on certain aspects of the Indian colonization of Indochina, and can be regarded as one of the most important achievements of French archaeology in that country in recent years", amplifies the knowledge we have of the famous state of Fou-nan, referred to in Hindu and Chinese texts, and confirms what was suspected in the brilliance and complexity of a civilization which flourished under Hindu influence.

In his book on the growth of Hindu domination in Indochina, M. Coedès tells us that "the first king of Fou-nan was a certain Houen-t'ien, or Kaudinya, who came perhaps from India, from the Malayan Peninsula or from the islands in the South. After dreaming that his attendant spirit had brought him a magic bow and enjoined him to set sail in a great merchant junk, he went into the temple in the morning and found a bow at the foot of the spirit's tree. He duly put out to sea in a ship which, at the agency of the spirit, made land at Fou-nan. The queen of the land, Lieou-ye, 'Leaf of the Coconut Palm', wished to seize the ship for herself, but Houen-t'ien shot an arrow from his magic bow and it went right through the craft which bore her. Terrified by this, she surrendered to Houen-t'ien who made her his wife. Dissatisfied when he saw her bare body, however, he folded a piece of cloth and made her put it over her head. Then he ruled the country and bequeathed his power to his descendants."

The robbers who plundered the site of Oc-Eo for centuries knew of its treasures by tradition, but we need mention only a few items to give some idea of the wealth discovered there in spite of them: more than 8,000 semi-precious stone beads of amethyst, carnelian and rock crystal; western-made "roman-beads" as well as "gilding beads", which consisted of a glass lamella between two glass plates; a large amount of beautifully made gold jewellery; bronze amulets with Brahminic symbols; silver "sun" coins of the kind often found in Burma and Siam; cameos and intaglios of Hellenist style but with Sanscrit inscriptions;<sup>1</sup> articles of Roman origin—especially coins and medals bearing the images of the Antonines; and a Sassanid stud-nail of opaque glass dating back to the fourth century, when a king of Iranian stock ruled over Fou-nan.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Filliozat, "impressed by the similarity of their forms with those in Central Asian manuscripts which were earlier than the regional types of Khotan, Kusha, etc.", connects them with Sanscrit inscriptions from India itself between the second and fifth centuries.



Between the second and fifth centuries, when Arikamedu<sup>1</sup> was at its height in India, a very brilliant civilization flourished in Fou-nan;<sup>2</sup> in a country which was still barbarous, it brought Roman, Hindu and Persian merchants into contact with one another and promoted the prosperity of the composite kingdom which preceded the empire of the Khmers and received the ambassadors of Roman emperors and Scythian khans. From Ptolemy we know the names of the centres of commerce which thrived on coasts from the Mediterranean to the Far East, but we are not always able to place them exactly. The discoveries of the *Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* in Lower Cochinchina and southern Cambodia enable us to retrace some of the sources of the immense activity which stimulated so much movement and exchange between Europe and Asia. In the course of research on the site of P'ong Tuk, the important discovery of a Roman lamp further confirmed the commercial and artistic eclecticism which we had been led to assume by Sanscrit and Chinese texts—the only documents we have on the power and beauty of the ancient kingdom of Fou-nan. It seems, in the words of M. Coedès, "at times like a veritable empire . . . whose civilization in the Mekong Valley paved the way for the triumph of the Khmer civilization, one of the most beautiful blooms of transplanted Hinduism in India-beyond-the-Ganges." It faded in the seventh century and was absorbed by rising pre-Angkorian Cambodia during the reigns of Mahendravarman and his son Issanavarman.

For long one of the least explored regions of Indochina, Tonkin suddenly leapt into the forefront of archaeological topics with a whole series of discoveries, the most important of which, in our view, were those at Dong-son. These led to the bronze drums which occasioned so much learned argument and warm dispute, and the excavation by M. O. Janssé of Chinese tombs which enable us to determine beyond question the political and cultural relationships which existed between China and Indochina.

As early as 1916, research by M. Henri Parmentier, head of the archaeological service of the *Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*, resulted in the discovery of the tomb of Kwang Yen, which probably dated back to the third or fourth century B.C. Providentially, it had been preserved from grave robbers, and still contained a full

<sup>1</sup> L. Fauchaux, *Une vieille cité indienne près de Pondichéry*, Virapatnam, Pondicherry, 1946. P. Z. Pattabiramin, *Les Fouilles d'Arikamedou*, Pondicherry, 1946. Dr. Wheeler *Ancient India*, fasc. II, 1946. Mention should also be made of G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, who, as early as 1938, published an interesting study of the Roman ruins of Pondicherry in the *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*.

<sup>2</sup> The ruins of Angkor Borei, which were discovered in 1944 by M. P. Dupont, also formed part of the kingdom of Fou-nan. On this rich archaeological site are the remains of one of the ancient capitals of pre-Angkorian Cambodia.



funeral suite, and, in particular, pottery and bronzeware. M. Parmentier subsequently excavated other tombs in the region of the Seven Pagodas, and found similar funeral suites which were probably of Chinese origin. At Nghi-Ve, under the supervision of Messrs. Parmentier and Goloubew, a model house in terra-cotta was unearched. It was in the same style as the Han models, and with its towers and ramparts, it seemed both like a fortress and a mandarin's palace. Research by M. Aurousseau and aerial investigations by M. de Reversat-Marsac enabled the exploration of Nghi-Ve to be carried further. The crowning success was achieved by M. U. Claeys at Lac-y in 1934. He found a remarkable funeral vault containing a large and important tomb which was still intact.

"What makes the last vault particularly interesting," writes M. Claeys, "is the arrangement of the door with a veritable façade wall in the south, and a kind of ventilation window contrived in the wall in the north. It was found sealed by a brick which was simply placed against it, and prevented earth from getting in. Perhaps this arrangement can be compared to the custom of representing a half-open door for the 'passing of the spirit', which is often found in tombs of the same period at Cheng-Chou and Lo-yang in Honan. The contents of these tombs are usually as follows: five large grain-urns intended for the five kinds of seed prescribed by ritual; three pot-shaped vases for different kinds of meat, and, in addition to a cooking-stove, other pots of different kinds, trivets and crockery. Our two last vaults at Lac-y had the full ritual suite with the exception of the trivets. It is characteristic of excavations both in Tonkin and China that the remains of the dead have never been recovered. As one can assume that wooden articles, furniture, carts, etc., were also included in the funeral suite buried with the coffin, and nothing of the kind has ever been found, it is easy to conclude that only bronze goods and well-fired pottery were able to resist decay. For all that, a corpse, coffin and perishable goods must once have been contained in these tombs. The openings broken through the vault are the work of robbers, and in any case, they are not adequate or sufficiently even for the remains to have been removed with official ceremony. In Korea, a Japanese scientific expedition methodically excavated some Chinese tombs of this period and was thus able to find vestiges of the bier. The architecture of these tombs is more like that of the remains in Tonkin than Central China. They have the same kind of bricks with a geometrical design on the surface, the same bevelled keystones, a similar layout of rooms and more or less the same dimensions. The coffin was mounted on two small walls

which formed a base. In the third tomb at Lac-y, there are two little walls which may have been intended for that purpose."<sup>1</sup>

M. Claeys rightly draws a parallel between the tombs in Tonkin and certain Korean tombs—especially the ones found by Messrs. Koizumi and Sawa in 1931 in the area of Heijo. The similarities are certainly striking, and it is useful to compare the description given by M. Claeys of the tombs which he cleared and comments made by Mr. Sueji Umehara on the results of archaeological research in Korea. "It should be placed on record," writes Mr. Umehara,<sup>2</sup> "that from the very beginning, the general government undertook archaeological research and excavations in the peninsula which have already shed light on many of the problems relating to its ancient civilization. Every year has shown results; specially worthy of mention is the discovery of multiple funeral chambers with mural paintings which date from the period of the Six Dynasties (A.D. 265-589). We should particularly like to dwell on the two last discoveries which enabled us to find some very valuable articles in Korean soil. One was made in North Korea; it consisted of the remains of an administrative centre of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 221), in which a large number of objects of this period were found. No similar examples were known hitherto, so that they are very important, from the standpoint of historical documentation, for the partial reconstruction which they permit of ancient Han civilization. The other discovery was of jade, silver and gold articles in the tumuli of the kings of Silla (Shinra), in the southern region of the peninsula. These are later than the objects found in the north and may date from about the fifth or sixth century A.D."

Mr. Umehara does not hesitate in asserting that "these excavations, hitherto unequalled anywhere in the Far East, are among the most important of the twentieth century; they can be compared to the excavation of Mycenae by the archaeologist Schliemann."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Umehara then gives a description of the tumuli of Tac-toung-Kang of the Han dynasty. "These tumuli are round or square with a mound-shaped earth rampart. Some of them have a funeral chamber made of bricks with a side entrance, others have them of wood with entrance from the top. . . . The wooden funeral chambers are built into the ground in scooped-out hollows about 3 m. 50 deep. The walls are faced with joists. The lacquered wooden coffin was placed here together with various objects and implements of the funeral cult. The chamber was then covered with earth and embanked to form a tumulus. The way in which they are fitted places

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*, vol. XXXIII, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> *Asiatic Arts Review*, March 1926.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

these tumuli in the same category as those found by Kozlov at Noin-Oula in Northern Mongolia, 100 kilometres from Ourga."<sup>1</sup> Many articles of the Han Dynasty have been found here, especially some very beautiful lacquerwork; this adds historical interest to its aesthetic value by bearing inscriptions which indicate where, when and by whom it was made. As the tomb of the painted basket will testify, this work still retains all its grace and freshness.

The royal tumuli of Kiong-chu, the site of the ancient capital of Silla, are much more important. "The largest are not less than about 110 metres in diameter and 22 or 23 metres in height—almost like little hills."<sup>2</sup> Thousands of pieces of jade, gold crowns and magnificent treasures were found in these tumuli and in the funeral chambers in the mountains around Kiong-chu. Among them, there was a Roman wine-glass which had made quite a long journey before ending in the tomb of a Korean king. In addition to the crowns, saddles, weapons and golden jewels, there were also a large number of *magatama* in green jade from the Kouen-Louen Mountains in China.

In his analysis of this last discovery, Mr. Umehara writes, "These *magatama*, of which we found a remarkable number, were hitherto unknown in China or any other part of the continent of Asia. It is only in Japan that they are found in great quantity. They were preserved in country where a people with little civilization customarily adorned themselves with the fangs of animals they had killed; later they used rare stones but still made them fang-shaped. This work is a product of ancient Japan; the discovery of *magatama* in the peninsula has enabled us to confirm that from this very remote time there were exchanges of civilization between South Korea and Japan."

Having observed the relationship between the tombs of Lac-y and Korean tombs, and the presence of Chinese funeral suites in the burial vaults of Tonkin, it is interesting to examine another discovery which shows close connections between Indochina and Indonesia: the famous Dong-son drums. M. Goloubew made a study of them in his *l'Age du bronze au Tonkin et dans le Nord-Annam*.<sup>3</sup> He shows their importance once again in *l'Archéologie du Tonkin et les fouilles de Dong-son*.<sup>4</sup> The site was a burial ground in the village of Don-son in Than-hoa province, North Annam. When the tombs were excavated by M. Pajot, he found a number of objects in iron, lance- or spear-heads, a Chinese sword and stone implements of a

<sup>1</sup> *Asiatic Arts Review*, March 1926.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*, vol. XXIX, pp. 1-46.

<sup>4</sup> Hanoi, 1937.

curious type, unknown in Indochina. They had been obtained from schist slabs—chipped out and partially polished. The most important remains, however, were bronzes, vases, weapons, implements, jewellery and, above all, bronze drums. They were smaller than the Ngoc-lu drum, remarkably made, and presented as many problems for the ethnologist as the archaeologist. In all probability, they date from the first century A.D. M. Janssé followed up M. Pajot's excavations and also found a number of drums, some of which were large. M. Parmentier and M. Heger examined the drums and made some observations which indicate how curiously they were embellished; their designs consisted, in fact, of strange birds—men, apparently wearing a large plumed head-dress like that seen on Maya or Mexican figures. Some of them seem to be sailing in a vessel which could be the ship of the spirits or the solar-bark (once again this ever-recurring myth is present—this time in Indochinese tombs).

What makes this fact remarkable is that similar themes occur in Malayan art, and the processions making their way round the vases of Dong-son are oddly like certain Oceanian rites still observed today. It is no surprise to learn that skulls resembling those of the natives of Borneo have been found in Indochinese prehistoric layers. M. Hubert shows, furthermore, that motifs on Indochinese pottery, especially from Samrong-sen, are exactly like those of Dayak basketwork, and M. Finot, one of the most eminent French authorities on Indochina, has attributed a common origin to the Hanoi drum and the civilization of Indonesia. "The picture which emerges from these ancient bronzes," he writes, "is of a farming, hunting and seafaring people who were probably totemist and whose style of dress, unknown in Indochina, occurs nevertheless in certain Oceanian islands. There can be little doubt that they were Indonesians, for both language studies and ethnography show that these people were once settled on the coasts of Indochina. They eventually yielded the country to newcomers and, with their language and customs, made their way into the islands of the Archipelago. On the mainland, only traces of their language remained; their customs were soon forgotten."<sup>1</sup>

M. Goloubew is therefore justified in regarding the enigmatic decorations on the bronze drums (which clearly served for funeral rites) as themes often used by the Dayaks, and as illustrations of certain ancestral customs. These, like the burial custom of featuring the ship of souls and processions of men dressed as birds—which we see on the bronze drums of Dong-son—were probably common to the race which at that time populated both Indochina and the islands of Malaya.

<sup>1</sup> *L'Asie française*, 1919.

M. Janssé undertook his excavations in different regions of Indochina in order to study Chinese civilization in this part of the world (especially under the Hans) and its eventual relationships with the West; his efforts produced splendid results. At Nghi-ve he cleared a strange tomb whose glazed bricks and nine chambers made it seem more like a palace. Bronzes in the tombs he opened at Lach-Truong suggested ties with Indonesia rather than with China. At Lim he found funeral vaults in which the brickwork was sculptured with mythological images; here the decorative themes were closely connected with traditional Han motifs but they were curiously transposed from their original use on cloths and mirrors. It is intriguing to observe how the sculptor used Chinese models—which were easy to transport—in the same way that Roman sculptors found their inspiration in Rhenish ivories, the evangelistaries of Treves, or Persian fabrics; these were brought by travellers and extremely well adapted by the schools of Auvergne or Provence, for example; but although they reappeared on church gateways and in local materials, they lacked nothing of the technique which had been used on the original ivories, illuminations, carpets or silks.

The Lach-Truong excavations were extremely important for the fresh proof they gave of the eclectic nature of Indochinese civilization. Among the funeral suites of the tombs he studied, M. Janssé found objects which were typically Chinese—though probably made by native craftsmen—side by side with work which it would be very difficult to identify because its constituent elements differ so widely in origin. I particularly wish to discuss a bronze statuette which is exhibited in the Cernuschi Museum and was probably designed as a lamp-stand. In M. Janssé's *Archaeological Research in Indochina*,<sup>1</sup> there are some very remarkable photographs of this curious image, and he has written a commentary on its significance. Ethnically its facial characteristics are not at all Chinese but could be Cham. On the other hand, similar lamp-stands have been found in Honan.

The figure is kneeling and from its shoulders there are stems—possibly tree branches—on which small images are perched. If we compare it with the sculptured bricks of Lim, it becomes possible to recognize it as an anthropomorphic portrayal of the sun-tree, the Tree-of-the-world's-end mentioned in Chinese texts. They tell us that, at the end of the world, on its eastern side, there is a tree with a trunk one hundred leagues high and with ten suns hanging from its branches; each of them is represented by a bird with three feet. The Lach-Truong lamp-stand is a reminder of this myth. For all

<sup>1</sup> Harvard Yenching Institute Monog. Series VII. Harvard University Press, 1947.



Fig. 2 *Lamp-stand from Lach-Truong*

that, it should be borne in mind that the kneeling figure supporting the tree, or who is the tree, has nothing Chinese about it. Though he quotes the opinion of M. Demiéville who sees it as a native of Central Asia, probably from Sogdiana, M. Janssé emphasizes the features the figure has in common with the statues of "Cham prisoners" which are often to be found in pagodas.

This *mélange* of Cham, Chinese and Indonesian elements is even more obvious in tombs which strikingly confirm the conclusions he reached in earlier research. The funeral vaults of Dong-tae, Tah-tho, Bim-son and Sam-son yielded a variety of objects in all of which there was strong evidence of syncretism in Indochina. The very shape of the tombs, which are cylindrical and sometimes have funeral chambers, is quite enough to claim the attention of an archaeologist. With brick vaults, they are sometimes 6 or 7 metres long and average a height of 1 metre to 1 metre\*50, but

occasionally, as at Dong-tae, they are as much as 3 metres in height. The tombs are generally concealed beneath tumuli.

The same riddles are set by bronze statuettes, similar to those of Lach-Truong and with the same curious ethnic characteristics—curly hair, prominent eyes, thick lips and a short, frizzled beard. Their use and the people they represent are problems that still have to be solved. Cham features occur again as well as elements which are essentially Indonesian, and the influence they have exerted on work which is patently Chinese accentuates the part played by so many different civilizations in the melting-pot of Indochina. M. Janssé is inclined to look for the ancestors of the Chams among the Indonesians, for their contribution to Cham art and customs is clearly marked.

Among the things found in the tombs which M. Janssé opened in Tonkin, and Upper Annam, there were some of the small rough models which are so common in Han art. One was of a cistern—very much like those used today—and there were vases, incense-burners, terra-cotta boilers, as well as other objects curiously shaped like animals—the cock-headed trivet of Qui-giap and the goat-headed model of an oven. But something very rare was discovered in a tomb in Hoanh-chung—a glazed terra-cotta egg. Eggs like these were found in the Caucasus near Kiev, and in Sweden where they are always connected with resurrection; this is readily assimilated to the theme of fertility and, by extension, rebirth; if we remember this, the presence of certain phallic symbols in these tombs is soon explained.

It is very important not to forget that the theme of resurrection has always been a source of deep human anguish. Magical cults, religions and arts have all stemmed from it, and for this reason, it seems to me that we are judging the matter superficially if we impute fertility rites to the purely practical end of increasing animal stock and producing rich harvests. As well as the theme of fertility there was always the theme of rebirth; that is why vegetable cults were also cults of resurrection. For man, the symbol of spring and renewed life in plants is always an allusion to his perennial longing for resurrection and survival. We have seen how readily he saw the daily rebirth of the sun as reason to hope for his own rebirth after death. Sometimes he even identified himself with the sun to justify the obsessive desire for survival which had lived in him since first he could think.

The egg symbol is therefore a very important one in funeral rites, whose object was to smooth the way for the resurrection of the dead. Burial itself was a necessary return to the earth—the matrix in which the dead were to accomplish their metamorphosis into new, living

forms, preparing, even by decomposition ("if the seed die . . .") for their rebirth. Oskar Goldberg emphasized the importance of horse-racing in funeral games in his study of the origins of Greek mythology.<sup>1</sup> The horse animal—the totem of the Indo-Germanic races, the horse animal-god—thus assumed a deep and quite unaccustomed significance. Sir Galahad shows furthermore, in his book on *Byzantium*,<sup>2</sup> that the races, like resurrection rites, took place in an oval circus—reminding us thereby of the recurring egg symbol in cults of fertility and rebirth.

It is interesting to find the symbol once again in Indochinese tombs, and the link which M. Janssé shows<sup>3</sup> between the egg found in Hoanh-chung and similar ones in Russia and Sweden lays stress on the element of eclecticism which permeates Indochinese civilization during this period.

These excavations, which disclosed Chinese objects in the same context as items of Indonesian or Cham origin (for it has not yet been proved that the Chams were of Indonesian descent) stimulate still greater curiosity about anything connected with the mysterious kingdom of Champa. Parmentier's work makes it possible to discriminate quite clearly between different Cham styles and in his *Inventaire descriptif des monuments chams de l'Annam*<sup>4</sup> he shows their distinctive features. He draws a line between primitive art, represented by temple A1 at Mi-son, which dates from about the seventh to the tenth century, and cubic art, which is also found at Mi-son in temple F1, dating from the eighth to the ninth century. Together these formed the composite art of the central tower in Dong-duong. In the eleventh century, this art gained the *classic* features to be seen in Binh-Dinh, for example, with derivative forms which emerged from modifications of style during the period from the ninth to the twelfth century. Though it was not so common, pyramidal art developed elsewhere between the tenth and fourteenth centuries.

Cham architecture probably first gave rise to wooden temples, nothing of which remains, of course, then brick temples and finally stone buildings. The similarities to be found in Javanese architecture and some of the work left by the Chams give very great weight to the theory of those who look for the origins of Cham civilization in Indonesia.

Mi-son is one of the most curious centres of this civilization. It was once a brilliant and flourishing capital; today only ruins remain to mark the site of its former greatness. At Chan-lo, again, we scarcely gain any idea of what Champa was like in the days of legendary

<sup>1</sup> *Die Götter der Griechen, Mass und Wert*, Zurich, December 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Payot, Paris, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 25th December, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> Paris, 1909<sup>2</sup> 1918.



splendour which are described in ancient writings. Excavations in 1934, following those a short time earlier in which some superb Cham sculpture was uncovered at Tra-kieu,<sup>1</sup> revealed the ruins of a city. If we are to judge it from its size and beauty, it must have been a Cham capital—perhaps, after all its changing fortunes, the last capital of the Champa kingdom. M. Gaspardone gives us a summary<sup>2</sup> of what was found: "It is a stretch of level ground beside the modern citadel of Binh-Dinh, close to the lagoon in which the Bay of Quinhon ends. From the tower which crowns the central hill (known as the Copper Tower), all we can see today are parcelled fields of maize and rice; in the west they are closed by the mountain range—in the east they merge with a horizon of sea and sky broken by two more tower-crowned hills. Paul Pelliot identified this place thirty years ago with Vijaya or Cha-ban, but it had never been excavated. Then a sandstone elephant was found by chance in October 1933. This discovery drew attention to a small hill nearby, which had once been used as a fortification by insurgents and was called Thapmam. In due course the *Ecole française* explored the area and, four months later, excavated a site which soon disclosed an accumulation of sculptured blocks buried in the foundations of a building which had been destroyed. Within a few weeks, several tons were removed in two sampans to the museum at Tourane. And it was, indeed, sculpture by the ton. The evidence of a period of decline is quite clear when these sandstone blocks are compared with those of Amaravati (Mi-son, Dong-duong or Tra-kieu). Between the *dvarapala* (god-guardian of the gate) of Dong-Duong, for example, and the still striking tel *dvarapala* or Siva of Thapmam, there is the gulf from near-perfection to backward barbarism. More distinguished by its oddness than its beauty, with its stiff stylized monsters, this work was promptly credited with Khmer and Malay influences; but the presence of the Sino-Annamite touch is at least just as marked. No doubt remaining inscriptions—which have not been published—will make it possible to date them."

The study of Cham sculpture calls, nevertheless, for a certain insight in order to recognize the Malay prototypes by which it was inspired. Above all, the Chams and Malays show the same moderation in their handling of large-scale work, and, in contrast with the grace of Khmer art, theirs is deeply infused with a grave yet simple nobility. A great deal can be learned by comparing decorative themes in the remains of Champa and Java; and their sculpture, which is well represented in the museum at Tourane, will also prove illuminating to anyone prepared to give it the study it demands.

<sup>1</sup> There are some fine specimens of this work at the Musée Guimet.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 627.

The ancient monuments of Cambodia have so often been described, and so often reproduced in exhibitions, that the names of Angkor Vat, Angkor Thom and Bayon, as well as the general characteristics of Khmer art, are very widely known—even by those who have never been to Cambodia to admire them. There is something strangely captivating in the art of these sites; it is not easy to remain indifferent to the musical charm which issues from their giant palaces as they slumber amid a harmony of terraces, lakes and pavilions. There is an unfathomable mystery in the enormous faces, either smiling or deep in meditation, that adorn the walls of their towers. And there is loveliness: in the point and counterpoint of art and nature; in the melancholy nobility of dead cities which once re-echoed to music and chanting; and in the silence of vast avenues, opened to make way for royal processions. In all these things Angkor typifies the ruined capitals that fancy so delights in magically restoring.

The *Ecole française* could not restore life in the dead cities of Cambodia but it has enabled archaeologists to discern the vital elements of their art and culture, and in their ruins visitors are not met with an abiding sense of decay and death. By restoring and preserving, but without going to extremes in reconstruction, French experts have re-created all the splendour of Angkor's architecture. Many large cities have been uncovered and others are still being found. In the cities which have already been explored, jungle vegetation has been cleared little by little to reveal new sites in their former lustre.

The magnificent temples of Angkor were all the more exposed to the influences of decay because they were often built with poor materials and with the haste characteristic of the Khmer kings, who were working, as it were, *against time*, and were finally beaten by it. The buildings of Angkor Vat were certainly erected during the reign of Suryavarman II, which means in less than thirty years, and with many teams of labourers tackling the work from all sides at once. Hurried work, the rapid growth of creeper and fig trees (of which Loti speaks), insects and humidity all help to explain how buildings could be demolished so quickly in a country which seldom suffered earthquakes. And finally, the arrival of the Small Vehicle school of Buddhism, "fundamentally opposed to personality, whose very existence it denied, could only bring ruin to an aristocratic cult which united the people in worship of their king and great chiefs. Perhaps this is one of the causes of the rapid decline of the Khmer empire in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. When once the king ceased to be the earthly form of Siva, or as Jayavarman VII had been, the living Buddha, the royal dynasty no longer

inspired the people with the religious awe which had enabled them to accomplish so much. Undermined by the anarchic spirit of Sinhalese Buddhism, its prestige diminished, its temporal power crumbled, and the god-king was thrown down from his altar. This was the twilight, both of the gods and the kings."

These are the circumstances in which the beautiful, complicated temples, some of whose decorative motifs, it is thought, may well have influenced the art of Renaissance Italy,<sup>1</sup> were so quickly reclaimed by nature. With the names of the mighty men to whose cult they were dedicated, these sanctuaries were forgotten until centuries later, when archaeologists cleared their way through virgin forest to gaze with astonishment at their towers which were like ziggurats—binding heaven to earth and providing the means by which gods came down among mortals—at the galleries with their slender columns and delicate bas-reliefs, and at the mysterious, smiling faces of immense images rising above the tumult of the jungle.

Thanks to these archaeologists and epigraphists, we have precise knowledge of the people who built vast sacred cities in the forest. The mysteries of the origin of the Khmers and their kinship with India have finally been solved. We know the history of the dynasties of ancient Cambodia as well as Egypt's, and we understand how these people used their symbols to represent in stone the myths of Hindu cosmology, reproducing in their arrangement of towers, galleries, avenues, pools, pavilions and walls the seven concentric mountain chains and seven oceans of the cosmic plan. M. G. Coedès tells us it was "an arrangement determined by magico-religious considerations whose ends were not merely use or beauty. For the ancient Khmers, architecture and decoration were a language for expressing the original harmony between man and God, between earth and the Great Whole. Their work consists pre-eminently of portraits or images and we must know their originals before we can reach the thought behind them." For both the archaeologist and the student of beauty, the sites of Cambodia demonstrate the curious way in which elements borrowed from alien cultures are cleverly combined in new and original forms. Khmer genius lay not so much in creating but in assimilating, adapting and elaborating. Though it had drunk from so many different springs, there was a strangely compulsive power in the work it left. This is all the more apparent now that we are beginning to recognize different phases in an art and culture which were at first represented only by a baroque period, as for

<sup>1</sup> This is not absolutely impossible. In some of Botticelli's drawings M. Goloubev has identified almost with certainty the influence of Li Lung-Mien, a Chinese painter of the eleventh century.

example at Angkor Vat. This is no more exclusively representative of Khmer art in general than an Italian Jesuit church would be for the gradual development from romanesque to rococo architecture. Modern discoveries will give us a better understanding of evolution and change in Khmer art. Though short-lived as far as style was concerned, it passed through all the phases which are the ages of a style's life, like a biological sequence in the growth of a living creature. But this does not hold if we choose to look on Khmer art as something introduced from abroad, for then, of course, it would be lacking in the transitional stages which punctuate a developing style; its early modifications would have occurred in another cultural atmosphere, under other influences and other climates.

I do not propose to relate the history of Khmer art; it would take us beyond the scope and original intention of this book, which is restricted to an account of archaeological discoveries. Nor shall I touch again on the great classic period of Angkor, which has been widely discussed and is now well known. It will be of more practical value to show those things discovered by archaeologists which can amplify or transform what we know of certain historical or aesthetic questions.

The excavations at Sambor Preikuk uncovered the vast ruins of an ancient capital which may have been the Icanapura of old chronicles. It presents us with an opportunity to study a very early stage of Khmer art. Though it is difficult to date, it shows striking affinities with the art of India and Champa. The architecture of the site is characterized by towers with sculptured brickwork and by successively receding floor levels. Its sculpture also shows the features of pre-Angkorian art, like the statues described by Ph. Stern in his *Esquisse d'une évolution de la statuaire*. The sandstone statues of Sambor Preikuk have the grace and detail which in his opinion are the hallmarks of pre-Angkorian art. This is how he described it<sup>1</sup>: "The folds of clothing, which are sometimes no more than engraved, have the concentric lines of the natural folds of cloth and not the vertical lines of pleating almost always to be found in the Angkorian period. Indian *hanchement*,<sup>2</sup> though stiffened and attenuated by now—for statues were tending to have the frontal appearance of the Angkorian period—nevertheless prevailed. Head-dress is often tall and cylinder-shaped: in portraits of Vishnu the hair seems to be covered with a polished cylinder; in Sivaite head-dress, on the other hand, the hair is knotted and hanging down in imitation of a hair-style which was common in India during this period—especially in the rock temples of the west. In pre-Angkorian art several divisions seem to be

<sup>1</sup> *Catalogues des collections indochinoises du Musée Guimet*, Paris, 1934, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Modelling of the hips.

distinguishable. Some statues are framed in a supporting arch; theirs is a large group and would seem important enough to be the main one in the art of this phase (probably of the seventh century); the eyes are prolonged and prominent, the relief of the body at this stage is remarkable, and the statues are sometimes life-size. Hariharas are quite common among them. In contrast with this style, there is a group of statues which seems earlier. They are small, almost all female and their *hanchement* is heavily pronounced; their clothing consists of specially draped material, their head-dress is usually cylindrical with the hair hanging down, they have prominent eyes and the arches of their brows are parted and in relief; their faint smile is very distinctive, quite different from that of Bayon and reminiscent of the Aeginetic Greek smile. It occurs, though less strikingly, on the large statues referred to previously. This group seems earlier than the main one, for it is closer to Indian art in its *hanchement* and much further removed from the Angkorian art which was to come. *Hanchement*, though already stiffened was still strongly emphasized; it was to be much less pronounced in the main group and in Angkorian art disappeared almost entirely. Prominent eyes and arched eyebrows are completely absent from early Angkorian style in which the eyes were very deeply set. These statues are small, for it seems that there was a reluctance to attempt life-size sculpture during this period. The large figures in the main group which immediately followed were thus probably the first life-size Khmer statues, and the supporting arches betray their sculptors' hesitancy and lack of confidence. There is a third group which, though small, nevertheless achieved rare perfection, and this seems later than the main one; the male figures have pouch-shaped drapery on their left side, and this was maintained, though diminishingly, throughout Angkorian art until the period of Bayon. One of the last features of Angkorian art is no longer represented at the Musée Guimet: this is the Buddhist sculpture of Prei Krabas. Characterized by their *hanchement* and a lissom quality, the statues of this group wear transparent clothing which clings to the bodies it covers, and their sculpture has quite close affinities with the gupta art of India. This resemblance and the contrast with pre-Angkorian art have encouraged the belief that it is the earliest work in the art of Cambodia."

The Indian characteristics of these statues confirm the view now generally held that the seed which flourished in Cambodia was sown during the frequent migrations from India perpetuated in the epics of Hindu literature. Mr. Wales, the Director of the Greater India Research Committee, set himself the task of retracing the stages of the route (especially in Siam and Malaya) which brought the con-



Terra-cotta Sao head, Chad



Deified ancestor—Sao, Chad

querors from India to Cambodia. It was vaguely known that they had cut short their passage through the Malacca Strait by crossing the Malayan peninsula and following the route of Mergui-Prechuab; it was assumed that they made their way through the Isthmus of Kra on the frontier of Burma, but evidence of their journey was necessary and only a fairly well established site could serve this purpose.

Mr. Wales found this site at Takuapa-Chaiya on the west coast of Siam; it contains remains of very great antiquity—statues of Siva which probably go back to the third century and are plainly of Hindu origin. Sri Deva was another stage on the way from India to Cambodia and it once held the pass between the Menam Valley and the plateau of Eastern Siam. It was one of the capitals of the kingdom of Fou-nan, and, as remains there still attest, it was strategically very important. That the Indians made their way from the Deccan is evidenced by a stone column bearing a Sanscrit inscription and dating back to the sixth century. From the characters on this stele, it has been determined that the writers came from the northern Deccan, probably Telingana, and—contrary to customary belief—they were not Pallavas.

From the general plan of the city, the remains of walls and gateways and the little sculpture which was found there, it seems that Sri Deva was founded in the fifth century by Indian settlers and was very important until the increasing power of the pre-Cambodian state of Chenla and the Buddhist kingdom of Dvaravati brought an end to its prosperity. But instead of ravaging its buildings, its enemies were content to leave them to the mercy of nature, who carried on their work until the Khmers established themselves there for a time in the twelfth century.

In his book *Towards Angkor*<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wales gives interesting descriptions of the remains of temples and sculpture in Sri Deva. The conclusions of the book deserve special attention; on the basis of information provided by archaeology, epigraphy and aesthetics, by extracting every scrap of detail from the smallest piece of stone, from the modelling of drapery or the treatment of an eye or hair, by the shaping of certain letters in an inscription and by dialectal peculiarities, the author establishes beyond question the movements and halts of the Hindu emigrants who colonized Indochina.

The transitional stages of several periods of Khmer art are in evidence at Banteai Srei and these make it possible to construct a stylistic history of the site. "This temple," writes René Grousset,<sup>2</sup> "one of the finest produced by Khmer art, was found in 1914 by Captain Marec, an officer in the Geographical Service. The divinity

<sup>1</sup> London, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Asiatic Arts Review*, Paris, June 1926.



worshipped here was Siva, attended by Parvati, and this explains the Sanscrit name of Banteai Srei, which was Ivarapura. It is none the less in a Vishnuite scene depicting the childhood of Krishna that the sculpture of Banteai Srei would seem to achieve its most perfect expression. Beneath the kindly light which Indra in heaven sheds upon the creatures of the earth, the scene which unfolds is full of natural grace and simplicity. With its delicate, plastic quality, it contrasts not unfavourably with the rather stiff refinement of Angkor Vat. Decorative themes develop in the same way with a rich exuberance which is far removed from Angkor Vat's somewhat rigid order—so much that the art of Banteai Srei is well described in M. Goloubew's phrase 'the flamboyancy of the Khmers'. The late period to which the temple must be ascribed makes the expression seem even more appropriate; M. Finot has been able to place it—on the detailed evidence of certain texts—at the beginning of the fourteenth century. We can gauge the importance of this discovery: until now it was accepted that Angkor Vat was the last of the Khmers' great artistic achievements and that it was succeeded by a period of sterility—the Siamese invasion and a decline. But on the very eve of this invasion, when Jayavarman VII was newly dead, the Khmer empire was producing the most sublime masterpieces of a living art. And yet, as though this ancient civilization of Cambodia were yielding all its perfume, its very soul, in the perfection of a single flower, it combined, with its newest, most subtle forms, a curious return to its distant past in the architectural and sculptural motifs of the little temple of Banteai Srei."

It is impossible to detail all the sites where excavations in recent years have so fully expanded our knowledge of Khmer art before and after the classical period typified in the buildings of Angkor. In the remaining areas of Cambodia and around Angkor itself there are ruins which represent the lesser known stages of Khmer art—its *Gothic* and *baroque* architecture, for example, and even a primitive style which may appositely be termed *romanesque*.

Similarly, the site of Bakheng—where one of the most imposing monuments is the temple standing on a hill of rock—preserves the remains of the old capital of Yasodhara and contains several chapters of the evolution of Khmer civilization in its ruins. The temples of Banteai Chmar, even more vast than those of Angkor, reveal the grandeur of a rival capital which lived at the height of Angkor's political and artistic flowering. Immersed today in the jungle of north-west Cambodia near the mountains of Dang Rek, in the fullness of its triumph it must surely have been one of the most splendid achievements of Khmer architecture.

Banteai Chmar contains the general features of Khmer art from

the tenth to the twelfth century, and the sculpture found there indicates that the cults of Vishnu and Buddha were both practised—possibly at the same time. Half-ruined towers, bearing enormous smiling likenesses of the Enlightened One, rise up amid a tangle of trees and bushes. Through them, comforting gentleness and peace shine from this beautiful face in the most perfect serenity achieved by man during his long quest for wisdom and contentment. Banteai Chmar is one of the most romantic sites. Its fallen ramparts could not halt the advance of the forest; its vast courts were covered by thick undergrowth; and a plant wall had to be stripped from the long friezes of religious and historic bas-reliefs, with fantastic *garoudas* or royal processions displaying all the pomp of ancient times, before archaeologists could study the perfection of their art. Kings in council with their ministers or at the head of their armies, mounted on the backs of their elephants with all the trappings of war, live on, amid all the fervour and manysidedness of the Court of the Khmers, over hundreds of metres of stone. Banteai Chmar was restored by archaeologists of the *Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*, but the gloom and splendour of the dead city still linger over the columns of its galleries and the flagstoned causeways flanked by unending nagas who suddenly dilate the hoods of their erect sevenfold heads at the tip of a balustrade. Statues of Buddha, deep in knowing and ironic contemplation of eternal *maya* or illusion—for outward appearance is the law of the world—are side by side with heavenly dancing-girls, their hair dressed with jewelled tiaras, their skirts clinging, and their full breasts exposed. The still, sad water of neglected pools mirrors the foliage of tall trees which have dislodged the paving-stones and intruded their long branches even into the privacy of the sanctuaries.

If there is a lesson for all mankind in the discoveries of archaeology, one wonders what truth can be drawn from contemplation of Buddhist peace in the grave beauty of these smiling faces, which rise above the chaos of virgin forest, even as the vision of the sage rose above the onset of passion and instinct, to survive after centuries of the blind ravages of man and nature, in the light and serenity of detachment.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DEAD CITIES OF AFRICA

AFRICA: an immense, mysterious, forbidding continent; its interior—unknown. It is a land of wilderness and jungle where strange peoples live in ancestral savagery. All the regions of this continent which lie along the Mediterranean have been visited again and again, and the civilizations which have taken root there since history began came from Europe and, for the most part, bore its seal.

Whilst Asia has always been regarded as a land of ancient and venerable culture, whilst even the brutally callous conquerors of America were intrigued by the people whose cities and temples they destroyed, Africa, until lately, has been a country without a heritage for the archaeologist. All the territory lying beyond the coastal areas lay under the shadow of barbarism, and few ventured further than the first cataract of the Nile, where civilization had its end. Early geographers were content to inscribe in a vast empty space on their maps, "Here there are lions".

There were lions, other strange beasts, and men whose faces were barely human. There seemed little point in wondering about the past of a people whose present was apparently so wretched and basically "savage". Because Africa had no written history, it was assumed that it had no past, or rather, that this had been as "savage" as its present. So it was that time, the elements and intentional or unintentional destruction were allowed to wipe out the evidence of this great past.

The only glimpses of it were in stories told by the natives, but "savages" can hardly be regarded as trustworthy. What they said of great Empires was smilingly dismissed as legend. It was forgotten that there is a fact behind every legend just as there is a physical or spiritual event at the root of every myth.

"It should not be forgotten," wrote Leo Frobenius, one of the greatest pioneers of African archaeology,<sup>1</sup> "that a generation ago, Africa for a cultured European was a waste land, the fever continent where only adventurers and missionaries could adjust themselves. The natives were savages, almost animals, a slave race living in a state of such abject corruption that it could give rise to nothing higher than fetishism. In those days, if you drew his attention in con-

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de la Civilisation africaine*, French translation, Paris, 1936.

versation to the large towns of the Sudan where there were hundreds of thousands of inhabitants, all well dressed and doing work of some kind, he would shrug his shoulders and reply, 'That's what the Arabs did for that scum'. For all that, in the last century, at the very time when the same opinion was held all over Europe, there were a number of very brave men who went ahead in spite of ridicule, fever and cannibalism to break through the barrier round this part of the world and, with tremendous courage, bring its true image to light. They knew that the commonly held opinion was false; they succeeded in looking for the first time on splendours they had never visualized. But another generation had to come before Europe was ready to accept what they had discovered."

Even if we admit that the Africans once achieved a very high level of civilization, how are we to explain the savage state into which they declined? The natural process of a rise and fall played the same part in African empires as in those of Asia, America—or Europe. Alien forces of destruction make their way easily along the lines of least resistance which are traced out for them by the internal decay of a social structure. But Africa was certainly not always in the wretched state in which nineteenth-century explorers found her, and this is proved by the accounts early chroniclers have left us.

"Not that the first European navigators at the end of the Middle Ages did not make some remarkable observations in this region. When they arrived in the Bay of Guinea and landed at Vaida, the captains were amazed to find well laid out streets, edged for several leagues by double lines of trees; for days they travelled through a countryside covered with lovely fields where the inhabitants wore gorgeous costumes made of materials which they had woven themselves. Further south, in the kingdom of the Congo, there was a swarming population dressed in 'silk' and 'velvet'; there were well run states—even to the last detail, powerful rulers and thriving trade. They were civilized here to the marrow of their bones! Much the same thing was to be found in countries on the east coast like Mozambique. The accounts given by the navigators of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries provide certain proof that Negro Africa, which reached up to the south of the Sahara, was still thriving in the glory of peaceful, well organized civilizations. The European conquistadors brought an end to its flowering as they progressed, for the new countries of the Americas needed slaves and Africa offered them—hundreds and thousands, full cargoes of slaves. But the slave trade was not guilt-edged; it had to have its justification and the negro was therefore treated as little more than an animal, a commodity. This also led to the invention of the fetish (from Portuguese '*feticerio*') as the symbol of African

religion—but the trade-mark of the invention was European. Personally I have never seen the natives worshipping fetishes in any part of Negro Africa. The notion of the 'black savage' is a European invention which consequently prevailed in Europe up to the beginning of this century."<sup>1</sup>

Today more importance is attached to these legends, which are history to the negroes and tell of the glories of their ancient empires. The remains of these lost civilizations are carefully examined and the proof they give of the truth of the legends is not casually dismissed. The barbarity of the Africans is no longer regarded as a primitive level of culture but, on the contrary, as a regression. Modern theories which present the negro as degenerate rather than primitive are coming increasingly into favour: they alone can explain how, from a very high degree of civilization, the Africans of almost every region of the continent could sink to such a low level, materially at least, for spiritually, intellectually and aesthetically they have a certain quality of civilization which has always remained with them. It is, indeed, a common error among Europeans to measure the "civilization" of other races by their own standards of material comfort and technical progress—the practical side of life. The Africans, on the other hand, reveal a highly developed civilization of soul which is reflected in their mythology, their cosmic theories, their religious rites and poems of unlooked for mystic grandeur.

Materially, perhaps the Africans are degenerate. Morally and intellectually this is less certain, and the work of men like Frobenius shows that they have high traditions closely connected with the beliefs we encounter in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and Elam—in fact, in all the great ancestral centres of Mediterranean civilization. African culture's great superiority, as Frobenius has clearly shown, lay in the holiness with which it imbued everything it created. "Whoever comes close enough to it<sup>2</sup> to understand it fully will quickly recognize that it prevails over the whole of Africa as the very expression of its being. It is obvious in the actions of the negro races just as it is in their art; it is proclaimed in their dances and their masks, in their religious consciousness and in their ways of living; their modes of government and their patterns of life as peoples. It lives in their fables, their fairy-tales, their legends and their myths. Having accepted this, if we compare these characteristics with those of Egypt, would it not be true to say that the principle which applies to Negro Africa defines the essence of Egyptian civilization as well? For there was surely the same deliberate severity of style, the same directness and solemnity in the art of pre-Islamic Egypt. All the countries of Africa have in common

<sup>1</sup> Frobenius, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

their multiplicity of languages, their tranquillity and their joy in living, but today, as in the distant past, it is through rigid solemnity of style that they find their fullest spiritual expression. When once it had come into existence, this style was compelled to maintain its individuality. There is a magic in it which derives from the mystery and remoteness of its origins. Can it be possible to grasp the spiritual essence of something so far removed in time?"

This helps us to understand the important problems facing the archaeologist when he comes to the African continent in search of the form and significance of her lost civilizations. How, for instance, can we explain the discovery of Ife, in the country of the Yorubas, of the solemn, magnificent clay heads, which are quite unlike anything else found so far? They are beautifully finished and have probably come down to us from remote antiquity. At times they achieve the perfection of ancient Egyptian sculpture and at first seem reminiscent of it, but in their relief, in the treatment of their eyes and hair, and in the very *life* which breathes through them, these heads retain a profound and unassailable originality. They may well date back to the second millennium B.C., and were probably made by the ancestors of the modern Yorubas; they seem indeed to have a distant collateral kinship with the bronzes of Benin which have similar ethnic features. Yet the most striking thing about the Ife heads is that they are quite unique; it is impossible to classify them or place them in any familiar category. And whenever we find the remains of an ancient African civilization, we meet the same stumbling-block—we are compelled to accept the African phenomenon as it is, to measure it by its own standards and judge it by its own criteria.

In Africa more than anywhere else, we must resign ourselves to remaining in ignorance. By this I mean that we must accept its phenomena as they are, knowing nothing of their relationship with patterns of thought which are already familiar to us or with styles we have been able to classify. We must bow to the fact that our questions go unanswered, for the time being at all events, and our curiosity unsatisfied. In many ways, Africa is still an unknown country "where there are lions", for her ancient peoples, even those who left monuments and works of art, did no writing. All that has survived of them lives in legend and popular tradition; but in them there are none of the *concrete facts* so dear to the European, but a poetic or mystical transposition, a kind of symbolism from which it is impossible to extract any clear historical outline.

Yet we must take courage in the knowledge that African archaeology is still quite a young study. Perhaps future discoveries will yield us the secrets of the dead cities of Somaliland, and we shall

identify the brilliantly gifted sculptors of Ife. We shall know the race of men whose rock carvings are scattered in their thousands over the whole continent, from the Mediterranean to the Cape, as relics of one of the most astonishing and fascinating forms of art.

Abyssinia still has many secrets and we have yet to discover which ancient civilizations lived on its high plateaux. The area of the great lakes in South Africa seems also to have been an extremely important cultural centre. And chance discoveries, such as those made in mines, have revealed the noble yet delicate work of an ancient and cultivated civilization. There is ample proof of this in the sculpture of the Nok Valley in Northern Nigeria. It shows a striking relationship with the heads found in the Wamba tin mines. Together with the discoveries at Jemaa in 1947 and 1948, these heads, with their curious, violently expressive art—almost caricatures—confront us with new problems. First of all it is very difficult to date them. It cannot be assumed from the flint tools found on these sites that the people who used them did not know how to work with metal, for metal and stone were often used at one and the same time, and stone was frequently retained for ritual purposes long after it had been dropped from everyday use.

From stylistic features, it seems that we can group the sculptural techniques of Nok, Wamba and Jemaa, the masks of the Yoruba and the wooden carvings still found today among the Dans of the French Ivory Coast or the Balubas of the Congo. Indeed, it is not impossible that there is a connection between Nigerian civilization and the culture of Ife which we mentioned earlier. In Africa traditionally recurring forms and styles provide an element of continuity which binds the art of the present very firmly to that of the past. According to the findings of Bernard Fagg,<sup>1</sup> an archaeologist in the service of the government of Nigeria, these original and remarkably executed statues probably date back to the middle of the first millennium B.C.

Today we are barely on the threshold of knowing something of the nature of these great African civilizations, some of which were absorbed by desert sand or the luxuriant vegetation of the jungle, and more often destroyed by invaders. Great empires with a culture of their own<sup>2</sup> were probably lost in this way, leaving remains which archaeologists are now gradually discovering. It may be that these civilizations were as advanced as those of Egypt or Mesopotamia, covering an area just as great and lasting for hundreds if not thousands of years. Our knowledge of them is still only fragmentary, but when once we have assembled a *corpus* of African sculpture, for example, we

<sup>1</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 20th April, 1947, and 20th November, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel Griaule gives us some idea of it in works such as those on the Dogons.

shall be able to recognize their characteristic elements more clearly. The research carried out by Frobenius made it possible to form overall theories and impressions; his methods are still valid and his ideas have lost none of their creative drive. Important progress is constantly being made in African archaeology. In Marcel Griaule's study of the cosmogony and metaphysics of the Dogons<sup>1</sup> we are confronted with the deeply complex traditions and ways of thought of a universal system which must surely have been the product of very ancient beliefs and long development. His discoveries and those of Jean-Paul Lebeuf in the country of the ancient Saos have revealed a civilization of high artistic accomplishment which covered a vast territory and had made remarkable achievements before it was destroyed by the Moslem conquest.

In certain regions there are the ruins of large cities such as Zimbabwe in South Africa to suggest that empires now dead had once lived there. Almost as important are the ruins of Dzata in Rhodesia, which are inhabited by the Makhwindas, a branch of the Bavenda people. The strongholds and ramparts of Ijebu Ode in the country of the Yorubas may be the remains of a proud capital which legend tells us was founded and built by the daughter of the Queen of Sheba. And there may also have been a great Nubian empire on the Atlantic (Pedrals<sup>2</sup> reminds us of this theory) originating from Nubia itself to which Egyptian civilization seems to owe so much. It is probable that Nubian invaders conquered a large part of Africa and even penetrated as far as Dahomey where many traditions recalling their supremacy still persist.

There are other areas where burial grounds provide interesting evidence of lost or degenerate peoples. At Krinjabo on the Ivory Coast, for example, a large number of statuettes have been found which represent the dead in a style both realistic and highly conventionalized. Krinjabo has provided a remarkable collection of funeral portraits which are artistically impressive and acute. Some of the images have been identified as portraits of kings who ruled in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The subject of the Saos is an even greater enigma. Between 1936 and 1939 the Lebeuf and Griaule expeditions (Sahara-Cameroons and Niger-Lake Iro) proved the existence of this mysterious people who once inhabited the Chad plain. Though in the past they were regarded as legendary there is now no doubt at all that the giant Saos actually lived. M. Lebeuf's investigations also enabled him to conclude that the term "Sao" is applicable to a number of different

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Griaule, *Masques dogons* (University of Paris Institute of Ethnology). See also his interesting and informative *Dieu d'Eau*.

<sup>2</sup> D. P. de Pedrals, *Manuel scientifique de l'Afrique Noire*, Payot, 1949.



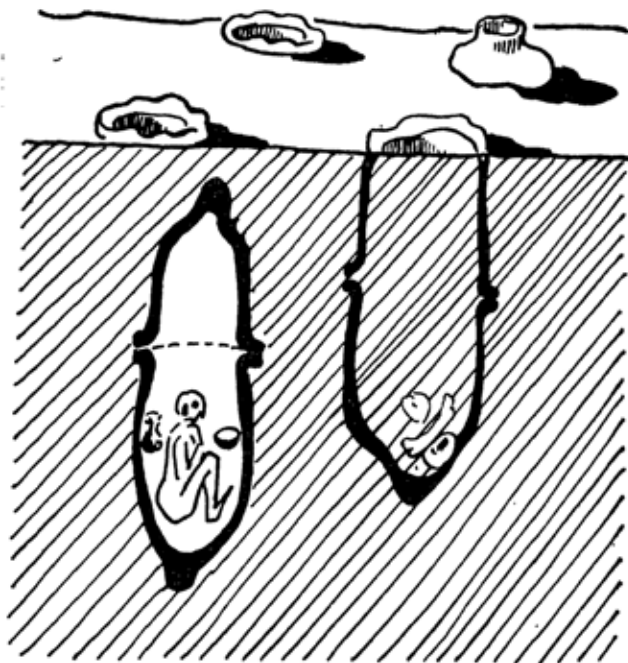


Fig. 3 Sao graves, egg-shaped jars

elements who had either been long established or had come from abroad, but that no acceptable explanation of its etymology could as yet be advanced. According to the myths of the Chad, the Saos were almost superhuman and certainly exceeded all normal proportions. "The Saos were so tall that they used whole palm trees for their bows, and their cups, which were as big as funeral jars, could hold two men sitting. They fished without nets by damming rivers with their hands. They took hold of hippopotami and ate them like chickens. Shouting from one city to another, they proclaimed their turn to fish and their voices carried like thunder to the Chad, frightening birds out of the trees. Their fingernails were so thick that they have withstood decay and it is boasted that they can still be unearthed from their mounds. In their hair there were the nests of birds of prey. In those days, gold was not static as it is today; it was alive, it issued forth from the ground and flew into the air. The Saos caught it by running. One piece placed in a house would keep it bathed in light."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Griaule, *Les Sao légendaires*. See also J.-P. Lebeuf's *Quand l'or était vivant*. •



*Fig. 4 Terra-cotta head*

Where, it may be asked, did they come from? Were they really a white-skinned people from the north as legend would have us believe? According to Arab authors, they came from Kheiber, north of Mecca. Remaining within the bounds of exact science, we can say with M. Lebeuf that Saos are known to have lived at Bilma five hundred kilometres north of Lake Chad during the ninth century, at the close of which they were slaughtered by Arabs. From the tenth century there were Saos living south of the Lake between Komadougou Yoobe and Chari. These may have come from the Nile or alternatively were natives of the southern part of the Chad Plain.

The most important Sao sites (usually inhabited today by the Kotokos who actually built their cities over them) are burial grounds. A very large number of egg-shaped jars has been found there, and in these the bodies were placed. Here again—and quite unexpectedly—we meet the egg theme which recurred in all the myths and rites so closely connected with resurrection.<sup>1</sup> As well as these strange coffins, some bronze jewellery, small animal figurines in terra-cotta and, most important of all, a wealth of terra-cotta statuettes of the dead, were found at Mahaya, Midigue, Goulfeil and Fort Lamy. The shapes of these statuettes are usually so fantastic that

<sup>1</sup> The ancient circus was the scene of the races which originated in funeral rites and later became purely sporting events. In its oval shape it retained something of its old association with the complex of ideas bound up with death and resurrection.

they seem like unnatural, hybrid creatures, wholly divested of any human quality.

The finest and most curious specimens were found by M. Jean-Paul Lebeuf in 1948 in the funeral mounds of Tago near Fort Lamy. It was there, together with Mme. Annie Masson-Detourbet, that he discovered an ancient sanctuary containing an extraordinary wealth of objects. "In the middle, two human statues rising up from a thick plinth were placed on an urn of the same type as the funeral jars. It was full of sand, and arranged around it at the points of the compass were four terra-cotta balls, each of which had its distinctive signs. Some distance away, there was a large round pebble, originating from Hadjer-el-Hamis, around which there were terra-cotta masks like those found in the other mounds; they were votive offerings, showing the various local styles we had previously been able to distinguish, and had been laid near to this stone which was imbued with supernatural powers. A dish, small vessels for offerings, the horns of animals, and some shells made the furnishings complete. Around about there were dozens of terra-cotta statues of a type previously quite unknown. They were about 25 to 40 centimetres tall and the finest were in human form. They were delicately modelled in fine clay, had square shoulders and were richly decorated in relief with heavy bead necklaces, chased breast-plates, and light bangles round their arms, which were outstretched in a gesture unusual in African negro art; their hair was braided into a crown, with complicated head-dress and stalks on the very top of their heads, perforated to receive feathers in a style which was worn by natives taking part in the expedition. . . ."

This strange yet splendid sculpture can be placed between the tenth century<sup>1</sup> and the sixteenth, when the disappearance of the Saos from this region coincides with the establishment of Islam. The Moslems are responsible for the damage done to statues, which show signs of having been struck, unless they were ritually destroyed, which was often the fate of funeral furnishings; the object of this custom was to dedicate them completely to the dead, either by making them useless to the living—who in this way would not be tempted to steal them—or by reducing them to the same condition as the dead who had also been "destroyed".

Hundreds of mounds are scattered over the Chad Plain marking the ancient dwelling-places of the Saos. The last inhabitants of these cities were driven out by the Moslem conquest in the six-

<sup>1</sup> "The earliest period," says M. Lebeuf, "in which there is evidence of the Saos south of Lake Chad—unless future research puts the date back even further, which is quite possible in the kind of work where events can take astonishingly dramatic turns."

teenth century and for the most part slaughtered or taken as slaves. "There were others," M. Lebeuf tells us, "who fled in three main directions: to the islands in Lake Chad, where we find their descendants the Budumas, to the west and to the south, reaching Mandara where they founded Dulo; some of them even got as far as the middle Benue. It is probable if not certain that the modern Kirdi of the North Cameroons have them among their ancestors.<sup>1</sup> Some of them remained in the area of the Chad and were converted to Islam by the invaders. They mixed with them to form the Kotoko people who live in towns which grew on the ancient Sao sites."

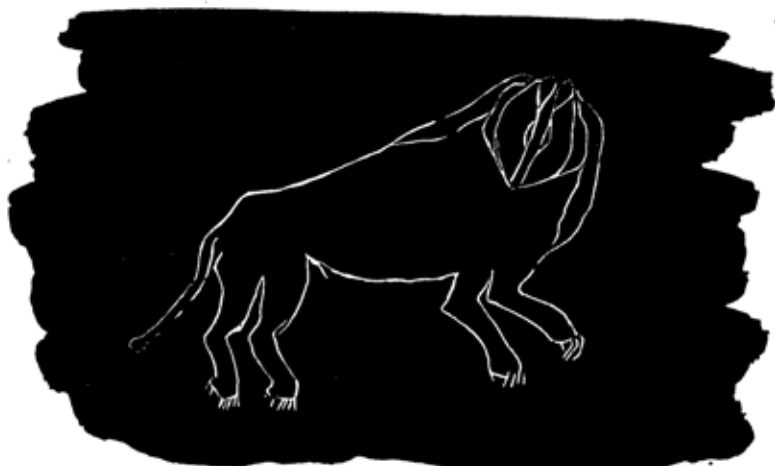
The mounds covering the ruins of the Sao cities are only gradually yielding their secrets, but when once it is completed, M. Lebeuf's research will prove that they achieved a much higher degree of civilization than we are at present able to imagine.

Perhaps the enigma of Zimbabwe and the other dead cities of South Africa will cease to stimulate the curiosity and ingenuity of archaeologists when at last they know something about the architects of their huge walls and cone-shaped towers. With the knowledge we have, we can only give hypothetical answers to the many questions they raise. As long as we know nothing definite, we can at least continue to savour the beauty and uniqueness of the remains without depriving them of the air of mystery by which they are surrounded. Africa has not yet fully revealed even her smallest secrets.

We said earlier that petroglyph art (using this heading to cover paintings, carvings or sculpture on rocks) was the work of a very ancient level of civilization which was scattered over every continent. But in Africa, which seems to have been their chosen country, petroglyphs are more abundant and more distinctive than anywhere else. This does not alter the fact that the number we have today is insignificant compared with the multitudes which must once have existed. For the thousands that remain, it is impossible to say how many more have been destroyed in the course of time by the crumbling of the rock and the wearing effect of wind and rain.

The immediate appearance of this work is striking and the impression it produces is very different from the one to be experienced in the caves of Les Eyzies or Altamira. The astonishing rock paintings and carvings of Africa are not hidden in the magical gloom of a cavern at the end of a narrow underground passage. They are exposed on the surface of rocks and in the hillsides; and we are confronted by a fantastic den of beasts as our eyes grow sufficiently accustomed to distinguish their tangled shapes—all the more confused because they were carved or painted at widely different times

<sup>1</sup> The natives of the Cameroons still wear pendants and breast-plates like those found in the tombs of the Saos or which decorated their funeral statuettes.



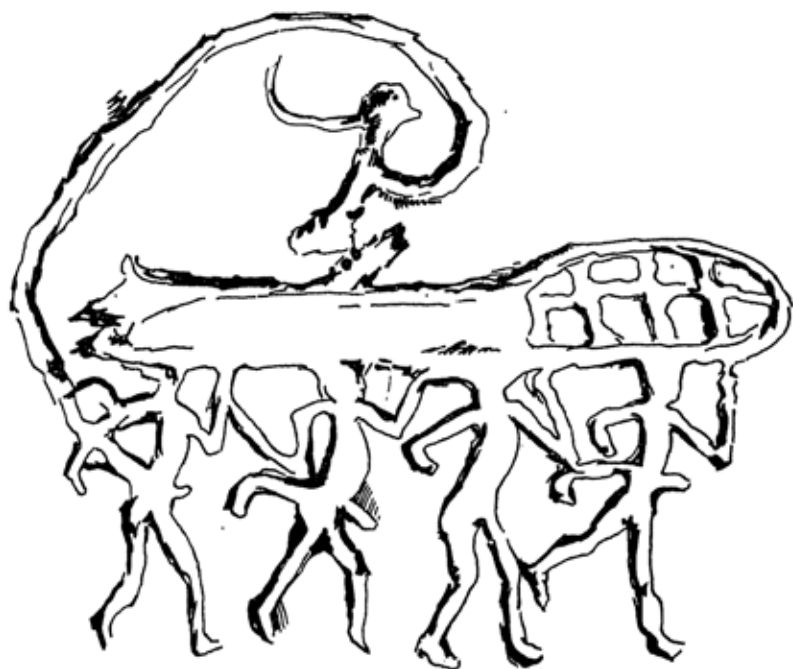
*Fig. 5 Lion, rock drawing from Jashu, Saharan Atlas*

and often superimposed on one another—and to sense the splendour and enchantment of their art.

The rock art of Africa was discovered more recently than that of prehistoric Europe, but the age and authenticity even of the decorated caves of France and Spain were challenged for a long time by experts themselves; they considered it impossible that prehistoric man could possess an art which was worthy of comparison with the finest achievements of historic times.

When Leo Frobenius was exploring the holy place of Jachou in the Saharan Atlas, his native guides pointed out what they called "talking stones"; they said that the expedition was now only a short distance from a massif where weird animals emerged from the rock at sunrise. Frobenius thought they meant wild beasts living in caves or crags but the guides were really referring to carved and painted animals. He made his way towards the place they indicated, and was astonished to find that with the first rays of the sun, the shapes of animals—lions, giraffes, elephants and buffaloes—became outlined in the rock. The great lion of Jachou, which is one of the most striking specimens of African prehistoric art, did not appear in profile like the other creatures, but showing full face; it was thus the first in a long series of portraits, possibly intended for religious or magical purposes, which extended well into historic times: that of the animal profile with the head turned to look back at the viewer.

When once the interest of the scientific world had been drawn towards the art of prehistoric Africa, expeditions increased greatly;



*Fig. 6 Men carrying the sky, rock drawing from Tell Issaghen II, Fezzan*

there was active research for even the slightest trace of these rock engravings, or petroglyphs as they are called, which bore witness to the presence in Africa in very remote times of peoples with an artistic sensitivity and technique which could produce work to equal the most splendid achievements in the caves of France and Spain. In their evocation of the fantastic these African artists deserve credit for a creative power which is possibly even greater than that of the Franco-Cantabrian artists. The masked magicians cutting up rhinoceros at In Habeter, the curious human portraits at Tel Issaghen, and the double-bodied monster of Djebel-bes-Seba to which a ram with a sun-disk between his horns is paying homage, must be included among the masterpieces of prehistoric animalist art; and the paintings studied by the Abbé Breuil in Rhodesia are the noble remains of a culture which once flourished widely; those who created it have vanished, or, like the Bushmen, sunk into degeneracy at the hands of white men—that is, when they have not been wholly wiped out.

The petroglyphs of Africa can today be divided into three



*Fig. 7 Elephant, rock drawing from In Habeter II*

large groups: the group of the north-west, which includes discoveries made in Morocco, Oran, the Atlas Mountains, Fezzan and especially Hoggar, which is an inexhaustible museum of rock art; the southern group which is also immensely rich; and the Nile Valley where images have been found which now tell us something of the race and origins of the first inhabitants of Egypt.

The particular fascination of the north-western group is that it preserves rock carvings of animals which lived in the Sahara at a time when it was still watered. Elephants bathing in its great rivers, rhinoceros roaming its grassy plains, crocodile and hippopotami wallowing in its swamps all tell the amazing story of a period when drought had not yet converted bush and jungle into a desert from which almost all vegetable and animal life was banished. The men who inhabited the Sahara at this time, which is at least twelve thousand years ago, were hunters, and their art shows the same magical and religious features as the art of the Franco-Cantabrians. It is impossible to be precise in dating these petroglyphs, but from their geographical location, of course, we know that they preceded the period when the land dried; animals migrated to watered regions and men followed them, leaving the territories which were no longer habitable.

Who were the men who carved real and fantastic animal images

on the rocks of Hoggar and Fezzan? The question now arises whether streams of civilization came from the north to the south or from the south to the north—whether from Europe to Africa or vice-versa. In all probability, in periods so remote that it would not be possible to place them within thousands of years, a number of races emigrated, taking their arts and skills with them; the streams from the north to the south and the south to the north met, and in certain chosen regions where civilization prospered, the peoples who came into contact with one another were even able to merge. This is the theory maintained by M. de Chasseloup-Laubat who has made some remarkable discoveries in the Saharan region of Upper Mertoutek.

In his view, Hoggar was "a focal point for contact between races and later the melting-pot in which a civilization was formed". This is quite likely if we are to judge by the astonishing number of rock carvings which have been found in these mountain massifs—and there are probably many more still to be discovered. We must also bear in mind that many petroglyphs must have been destroyed by natural forces—that the rock crumbled under the influence of damp and heat. Frobenius writes, "The galleries of rock paintings at Fezzan seem now like a vast mass of ruins. Even the hardest rock cannot stand up to this climate. By day there is the terrible heat of a blinding sun accompanied by storms of burning sand which lash everything above the ground or on a level with it; by night there is icy cold. Between three and four in the morning a sleeper wakes easily in the Wadi area because a cold wind sweeps over the country; then from within the rock-mass he hears sounds like distant rifle shots; the stone is cracking and breaking up. At noon, if the whirling winds of the sandstorms come up the river valley and fling themselves against the sheer face of the mountain-side, he will often hear an increasing murmur, sometimes near him and sometimes in the distance; the wind has dislodged some boulders from a ridge and they, as they fall, bring others with them, building an avalanche. Hundreds of the ancient paintings which once adorned these rocks must surely have been destroyed in this way. We should add in this connection that the rock fragments found today in the river bed are for the most part the remains of ancient works of art, whilst all the paintings which can be identified for certain as more recent are in a reasonably heartening condition." If it is difficult to fix a date to these carvings, it is also often impossible to determine their age as works of art, not by precise dating of course, but even relatively, according to the method of historical sequence which is used for example in the examination of ancient pottery. For hundreds and perhaps thousands of years drawings



have been juxtaposed and superimposed on one another although time may separate them by whole generations.

When we see a picture of men riding on camels and carrying rifles and standards, it is not difficult to identify this work as recent; in the same way, when it depicts animals who left the region thousands of years ago, we can conclude that the artist had seen them in what was then their natural environment. What confuses this issue is that in fairly recent times the natives were given to drawing camels on stone as though drafting a kind of deed of ownership. That is how Altheim interprets the drawings of dromedaries found on the frontier of Syria and Hedjaz at El-Ela and Teima.

Dromedaries are comparative newcomers to Africa; the rock carvings in which they appear cannot be very old because camel-riding nomads were not observed in Africa until the coming of the Romans. The very small number of these animals in the booty captured from Juba of Mauritania—there were only twenty-two—shows that they were rare and precious. They do not appear to have been an important military element in Egypt until the period of the Ptolemies.

In addition to the vast number of petroglyphs lost through the action of natural forces many were probably intentionally destroyed through religious fanaticism or superstition, or simply by fear of the "talking stones", the magical beasts appearing from the rock at sunrise. It should also be noted that these petroglyphs are often very difficult to read. If the natives declared that they came to life at dawn it is because that is the time when they can most readily be distinguished; when they are fully bathed in light it is seldom possible to discern their outlines in the stone among its natural irregularities—its juts, its clefts and its crags. If these works remained undiscovered for so long, and if there are no doubt many more which have still not been examined, it is because of the immensity of the petroglyph area; because of the effort often required to reach and study them in the almost inaccessible places where—either by chance or design—they were concealed; and because of the great experience and constant vigilance which recognition of them entails. L. Carl and J. Petit, who made some very interesting discoveries in Tedfest (Central Sahara) hope to perfect a means of dating according to the patina on the rocks. "We know," they write, "that the rocks of the Sahara are covered with a thin dark film which developed in the course of centuries under the combined influence of various physico-chemical agents. The incision of an engraving thus exposes the lighter coloured substance underneath; the patination process comes immediately into play and continues until it has achieved the same consistency over the engraving as the

rock around it. There are very few instances where this consistency has so far been achieved. It should thus be possible, with the appropriate laboratory techniques, to date, if only approximately, the beginning of the patination process and obtain from that the age of the engraving itself."

Some useful information has been thrown up by the study of lithic sites where the remains of human dwellings containing stone implements have been found in the area of the petroglyphs. It is important to remember, furthermore, that the Sahara may have been inhabited a number of times—when its periods of fertility alternated with periods of desert sterility. L. Carl and J. Petit have shown, for example, how in 1952 Hoggar enjoyed unusually heavy rainfall and thousands of head of camel stock poured in from the Sudan.

The identity of the peoples who created extraordinary works of art in the Sahara is still very much a matter of conjecture; perhaps the artistic genius of not one but several races produced this work. Today we recognize the important part played by travel and migration in prehistoric times. We know of the immense upheaval of peoples from continent to continent; of their expeditions in search of discovery, conquest and trade; of the way they changed from culture to culture; how they exported their raw materials, their fashioned goods—and perhaps even their works of art.

According to M. de Chasseloup-Laubat, Hoggar, the "prehistoric museum" of Africa probably nourished many different civilizations. He adds an interesting religious reason to those we have just given in explanation of the movements which took place. "We can well imagine negroid masses from the Equatorial regions," he writes, "or rather, a chosen few of them (if I may venture to put it that way), making their way north by the Chad and Tafassasset in search of a more temperate climate, coming to rest at the earthly paradise which Hoggar must have been in the days when it was not so dry, and gaining a new refinement as soon as they made contact with its climate. We can also imagine men of Cro-Magnon type coming from the north through the Iberian Peninsula or the Gulf of Gabès, and making their way south along the route of Irharhar, in flight perhaps from the ice by which Europe had been overtaken; inured to war and already advanced through their long contact with cold climates, they also came in search of more temperate zones, but, more than this perhaps, they were conforming with a human law which to my mind is fundamental: that advanced and declining races, like an aged man, will tend to return to the warm conditions in which they were first able to flourish. In contrast, it is less easy to imagine, even during the period

when the Sahara was watered, that an important influx could enter Hoggar from the east: the east was watered by the Nile and already enjoyed a temperate climate. Is it logical that men would leave a favoured area like this *en masse* for another on the same latitude? That they would proceed due west to an area 3,000 kilometres away which was not connected to their own country by a river route but had a climate which was more or less the same? Indeed, no obvious need for a change of climate or country appears, and everything points to the conclusion that if there were movements from east to west, they were negligible compared with those from other directions; it follows that they must have been fostered by religion—by the fascination which drew some primitive peoples towards the setting sun."

This cult of the setting sun, shared by many different civilizations at different times and in different places, arose from primitive man's belief that the sun died in the west every evening, and that from there, on the following day, the new sun began its underground journey to reappear in the east. The idea of resurrection was naturally associated with the death of the sun every day and man's hope that he would be able to "survive" in the same way; that was why tombs were so often turned towards the west: so that the dead could also travel with the sun on the underground journey back to life.

The rock art of Hoggar possesses a remarkable aesthetic quality. Sometimes the animal drawings are imbued with a naturalism which might fittingly be described as "living"; and sometimes they are conventionalized in accordance with a religious tradition. In drawings of ostrich hunting we can recognize the custom which was common among primitive peoples of disguising themselves as the animals they were hunting so that they could come close to them without startling the flock. There are some large and very beautiful paintings of multi-coloured oxen, and these show that the artists of Hoggar had a highly developed sense of form. But the finest drawings are of men and women. The women particularly show a delicacy and grace which calls to mind the most enchanting periods of Egyptian art or even that of eighteenth-century Europe. Some of the dancing-girls are quite delightful and yet wholly distinctive.

Did these dancing-girls belong to the race which lived in Hoggar at the time when the rock drawings were carved or painted? If we wonder about this—and the highly accentuated Egyptian character of these exotic figures also moves us to do so—it is because dance scenes have been found in South Africa as well; in these the women are so plainly Egyptian that an English archaeologist has advanced a theory that a troop of dancing-girls came from Thebes

or Memphis, summoned by some unknown South African king with whom the Pharaohs had ties of trade or friendship; that they made the long journey across the continent and that the natives of Rhodesia were so impressed by this extraordinary spectacle that they wished to record it on the walls of rock.

Are the dancing-girls of Oued Mertoutek the same ones who appear in Rhodesia? Were tours by dancing groups as common in prehistoric, protohistoric or ancient times as they are today? To answer these questions we need to be certain in our dating of the rock paintings of Hoggar. As geological strata do not enter into it, this would not be possible unless the paintings were found together with stone implements of a given period. Flint tools have often been found at the foot of painted rock walls, but no one can say whether they are of the same period as the paintings. As for animal drawings, the most they can tell us is that they were done at a time when creatures of that type lived in a watered area—when the Sahara was not a desert. From research by M. Th. Monod, we now know that the Sahara has had two periods of drought separated by an interval when it was watered, since man first appeared on earth. It is likely then, that at a time when men lived in the moist and fertile Sahara, Egypt was still uninhabited.

The fact that camels appear in African petroglyphs was still maintained quite lately as a proof that the paintings could not be very old; it was contended that the camel did not come to Africa until Roman times, and Conrad Killian, who made a close study of the differences between the cameline and pre-cameline periods, narrows the time of its arrival to the third or fourth century A.D. But to what extent can we associate the coming of the camel to Africa with the mysterious Garamantes? Unfortunately archaeology only admits certainty as long as new discoveries do not invalidate old ones or, at least, give rise to unlooked for theories. Since fossilized camel remains, probably much older than the so-called pre-cameline period, were found in Tripolitania, the idea that the camel did not exist in Africa until Roman times becomes questionable and so do the chronological theories which are based on it.

There is another reason why the petroglyphs of Hoggar cannot be dated specifically: some civilizations preserved certain customs and uses longer than others and remained faithful to religious beliefs and aesthetic practices which had long been discarded in the area about them. The phenomenon of conservatism may well have had its part in the art of the Sahara, so that long after the country had been abandoned by most of its inhabitants, the minority which remained continued to reproduce untiringly the themes and forms which their ancestors had handed down to them.

In the mountain massif of Tassili, Henri Lhote's expeditions in search of petroglyphs, following those of Cordier, Gardel, Killian, Duprez and Brenans, led to the discovery of more than a thousand paintings from which he was able to take copies. The 1956 expedition brought back an extraordinary collection which can be placed in four periods according to style and subject matter. The first period belongs to a hunting civilization and the shapes of antelope are dominant; after them come herdsmen with their cattle. Later on the horse makes his appearance, either with a rider or harnessed to a chariot; and finally, taking his place in the art of Tassili comes the camel.<sup>1</sup> The first period dates from about the eighth millennium B.C., and the second begins in the fifth; the horse was introduced into the Sahara around 1200 B.C., and the camel in early Christian times. Strange yet magnificent, the frescoes of Tassili show many affinities with South Africa, probably Egypt and perhaps Franco-Cantabrian Europe; strikingly original in their forms and often mysterious and terrible in their portrayal of fantastic monsters, they have greatly expanded our knowledge of Saharan petroglyphs. Henri Lhote's expeditions show once again how widely the Sahara was inhabited during its "moist" period and how intense were the creative instincts and imagination of its inhabitants at the dawn of its art.

Writing on South Africa, the Abbé Breuil speaks of engravings left by prehistoric men on the basalt rock of the high table-land, of their paintings in the shelters under sandstone rocks at its edges, and in the granite caves of Northern Transvaal, South West Africa and Southern Rhodesia—"panels of high artistic merit which make this area seem like a wonderful museum of the art of hunting peoples. Scattered over it are the pages of a chapter in the history of art as important as the chapters on the ancient art of the classical world."

And indeed, the gigantic figures in the region of Fort Victoria, the splendid retinue of the "white queen" at Brandberg, the religious ceremonies of Makhetha in Basutoland, the sphinx-griffins at Gross Spitzkop, and so many other masterpieces of Bushman art, provide one of the most remarkable living manifestations of a people, now almost wholly extinct, who brought prehistoric tradition to such a high level in the portrayal of animal life, and whose imagination surpassed that of modern surrealists in its evocation of the fantastic and supernatural. Weird creatures of all kinds and men with the heads of animals (like the man-elephant of

<sup>1</sup> For studies of the petroglyphs of Tassili, see Henri Breuil's *Les Roches peintes du Tassili n'Ajjer*, Arts et métiers graphiques, 1954, and Henri Lhote's *Search For the Tassili frescoes*, Hutchinson, 1959.



Fig. 8 Animal, engraved rock drawing, Konfffontein, South Africa

Cinyati in Natal and the magical hunter of Quthing in Basutoland) contrast with the Bushmen's masterpieces of naturalistic animal art in triumphs of fantasy which leave Hieronymus Bosch a very long way behind. The huge body of a dead king, already divested of all human qualities, and with small shapes of huntsmen and warriors moving around him (Rusape, Southern Rhodesia) is one of the most striking specimens to be seen.

The "portraits of the spirits" deserve to be mentioned among the most curious creations of South African art. From the rock walls of Macheka, these long, spectral, haunting figures seem like great floating shadows cast over the ground; like terrible apparitions whirling in a wind from the beyond, they at once fascinate and unnerve. We must not forget that, for all the thousands of rock paintings which have been found and studied in South Africa, there are probably many more still undiscovered in which the very shapes they depict will create new problems to be solved.

When the Bantus invaded South Africa and began to drive the Bushmen, the original inhabitants, into the barren waste lands of the country, they were amazed by the beauty and abundance of the paintings for which their predecessors were largely responsible. According to M. Ellenberger,<sup>1</sup> it is related that "towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the great chief Mohlomi, the traveller king and black Nestor, came with his Bakoenas to settle in the north

<sup>1</sup> Victor Ellenberger, *La Fin tragique des Bushmen*, Amiot-Dumont, Paris, 1953.

of the country, in the neighbourhood of the modern city of Ficksburg, he purposely chose a site which he called Ngoliloe (Inscriptions) because of the many beautiful paintings which the Bushmen had left there. When Mohlomi's Bakoenas saw the paintings for the first time, in their admiration they exclaimed, "These were painted by the gods".

Bushman art provides one of the richest and most extensive museums of prehistoric times, inspiring Frobenius to write, "The number of drawings found between the Zambesi and the Cape on one hand, and between the mountains which fringe South West Africa and those in the east on the other, far surpass all the rest of the world's prehistoric and protohistoric art put together. . .".<sup>1</sup> A division can be made between engravings and paintings, the work of races and immigrant streams of different origins. This marked difference between peoples, those who preferred to paint and those who preferred to engrave, derived not so much from the physical conditions in which they found themselves—the nature of the rock base, colouring materials and so on—as in a contrast of aesthetic approach and, perhaps, religious thought. It would be fascinating to study the aesthetic approach of the Bushmen engravers and painters for an insight into their style.

Their painting methods were preserved unchanged from remote prehistory until quite recent times, when the last Bushmen still had artists living among them. Their brushes were made from the hair of the gnu and later, horse-hair; they used mineral powders of different colours which they mixed with fat, like the quaternary artists of France and Spain, and plant juices as well. When rock surfaces were difficult to reach, they used ladders like the one in the painting from Morija where the Bushman artist is seen perched at the top.

Like the rock engravings of North Africa, the art of the Bushmen is very difficult to date; their enduring forms and traditions were based on certain artistic canons which it was impossible to discard. Where the original work of the Bushmen is concerned, it may have come down from earliest prehistoric times or date only a few centuries back; but for the archaeologist, what is even more baffling is that the engravings and rock paintings of South Africa contain foreign elements quite unlooked for in this part of the world, and these set stimulating new problems to be solved. The Abbé Breuil has written some noteworthy studies of these elements<sup>2</sup> and revealed some intriguing possibilities.

<sup>1</sup> Leo Frobenius, *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas*, Phaidon Verlag, Vienna.

<sup>2</sup> Especially in *Les roches peintes d'Afrique australe, leurs auteurs et leur âge*, in *Anthropologie*, nos. 5-6, 1949.

Archaeologists have been drawn to this aspect of the problem by the presence in the paintings of objects which were alien to the civilization of South Africa; a type of shield which was used by the Sumerians in the third millennium before Christ, triple-curved bows common among the peoples of the Nile, Nigerian fibre helmets, and the long Sudanese lance which was quite different from the short Bantu assegai. Some of the figures portrayed are distinctly Semitic in type and quite unlike the natives of South Africa. Some are playing a kind of flute which is exactly like the Greek *aulos*; and some of the monsters which appear are faithful copies of the sphinx and griffin which we first came upon in Egypt and Greece. If we relate this evidence with the discovery in South Africa of ancient Phoenician, Egyptian and Palestinian coins, we cannot refrain from wondering how early and to what extent there was trade or artistic exchange with the peoples of the Mediterranean.

We need to be very wary, however, and we have our lesson in caution from an unfortunate incident which actually took place in South Africa some years ago. There was great excitement in archaeological circles when Roman coins were discovered in an area where no exchange seemed possible; the mystery was solved when it was accidentally found out that the coins belonged to a collector who lost them whilst crossing a stream. Similarly, certain unusual changes in the terrain led to the discovery of soda-water bottles in archaeological layers which went back to remote pre-historic times. These are "traps" which chance sets for us and we have to take care not to fall into them.

This is natural enough, however, and history soon affords proof that the gold, tin and copper mines of South Africa provided a wealth of currency in periods when travel was already extensive, and when there was regular traffic between continents. It seems quite likely that the Sumerians, Egyptians and Greeks traded with the peoples who exploited these mines and this should not occasion any surprise. Though we may not be able to impute an obvious far-eastern source to the Basutos' "Chinese hat", Egyptian bows and Sumerian shields are at least not completely out of place in South Africa.

Side by side with genuine Bushman and Bantu works of art, there are others which it may be possible to attribute to "foreign" artists or which were inspired by these foreigners and their mode of dress. There are paintings in South West Africa, as the Abbé Breuil tells us, "which indicate that the region was inhabited for a long time by a people who were neither negro, Bushman, Bantu nor Hottentot", and in these the dominant racial type is white. Was the famous White Lady of Brandberg a white queen who ruled a black people



in a region invaded by an alien race from beyond the seas? This does not seem impossible if we take into account the comparative nearness of the shores of the Indian Ocean, and the easily accessible valleys lying between them and Brandberg, of which invaders, travellers or merchants could easily avail themselves.

At the present time it is impossible to give conclusive proof of the influence of the Mediterranean world on the art of South Africa; but are we compelled to accept with the Abbé Breuil that a foreign tribe, of mixed racial origin but with important Mediterranean strains akin to the Egyptians and Cretans, settled in South West Africa before Christian times and stayed there long enough to cover hundreds of rocks with their paintings—over and over again? There is, indeed, evidence to suggest that such people brought in ways, customs and beliefs similar to Egyptian ones; possibly they maintained contact with the land from which they had come, or perhaps, since Egypt is an African country, both civilizations were developed from a common original.

According to native tradition, at a time lost in antiquity there was a migration route connecting the Sudan to Southern Rhodesia; it passed between the great forest land and great lakes, and it was landmarked by cities like Zimbabwe. There is also the tale of Zimba, the Abyssinian prince, which tells how he came to live in South Africa when he was exiled from Ethiopia; and then there is the more mysterious and fascinating story of the "prince from the north" whose ghostly caravan crosses Africa twice yearly, from north to south and from south to north, a caravan which white men, and even archaeologists, are said to have heard if not seen. . . .

Carved and painted rocks, legends and the enigma of her ancient empires have made Africa, in the fullest sense, a land of mystery and the fantastic. We must pass on from the unknown people who carved and painted incredible images on walls of rock to a period less remote, less obscured by the impenetrable cloud of prehistory, and perhaps contemporary with the beginning of the Christian era. But Africa's mystery will not diminish: the enigma of Zimbabwe and the dead cities of the south will be just as complete and just as fascinating as the enigma of the ancient rock carvings.

Zimbabwe! The name's very resonance has the power to draw the curiosity of visitors, and those who know the huge walls and the cone-shaped tower of the city from photographs approach it with mixed feelings of eagerness and excitement which direct contact with the ruins proves justified. We should add that Zimbabwe is today very easily accessible from Fort Victoria and in tours of South Africa it is quoted with the waterfalls of the Zambesi as their most thrilling attraction. No one would leave Naples with-

out visiting Pompeii and in the same way, no South African trip would be complete without a tour of Zimbabwe.

Although it is now open to visitors, the dead city has lost none of its mystery; as much for experts as for tourists, its enigma has remained unsolved. Zimbabwe is one of the great unknowns of the archaeological world, and unless something providential happens, it seems that it will remain so for a very long time to come. It is not, in any case, the only dead city of Rhodesia. This was once one of the world's great mining regions; the ruins of Khami, for example, not far from Bulawayo, attest that the site had held an ancient city which was also probably a mining centre.

W. J. Perry has upheld the very interesting theory<sup>1</sup> connecting megalithic civilization with metal-bearing layers. In his view, megalithic building was always in the neighbourhood of mines, especially gold mines, and he explains the rise of civilizations by relating them to the exploitation of precious metal deposits and pearl-fisheries. Mr. Perry bases his very convincing theory on well reasoned and cogent argument and it is interesting to find it borne out in the dead cities of South Africa; these show all the features of megalithic civilization and are indeed in gold-mining areas which have always been exploited. If we take into account the enormous amount of gold used by the civilizations of the ancient world at a time when the deposits of America and Australia were unknown, we can only suppose that the Mediterranean peoples were supplied with the metal they needed by the mines of South Africa.

Legend associates the ruins of Zimbabwe with the memory of King Solomon. We are told that he obtained his gold from here, and it seems possible. It is even more likely that the Egyptians recognized the wealth of the country and exploited it long before him. Perhaps Rhodesia was the mysterious land of Punt which the Egyptians mentioned in their texts and which yielded so much gold, or perhaps the Sumerians' Meluhha, where the precious metal was again to be found. In any event, Rhodesia was undoubtedly visited by travellers very early in ancient times. In about 600 B.C., Nechao's great voyage (which Herodotus refers to at length) probably brought the Egyptian fleet to its coasts and the crews may even have landed at Sofala which was Zimbabwe's port. Rock paintings have been found in South Africa which show clear traces of Egyptian influence: the frescoes of Rumwanda, for instance, in which Miss Margaret Taylor has identified an Egyptian orchestra. They may have been a band of itinerant musicians, seeking their fortune in the land of the gold-mines; perhaps they were slaves offered as a gift by one of the Pharaohs to the king; or possibly they were

<sup>1</sup> *The Growth of Civilization*, London, 1924.

merely the ship's music-makers on one of Nechao's vessels, whose appearance may so have astonished the negroes that they made a painting of them on the rock.

There are many possible theories though it is still rather premature to connect Zimbabwe with Israel or the Pharaohs. It is understandable if travellers were enthralled by the splendour and mystery pervading its buildings, which rank among man's most remarkable achievements. This makes it all the more astonishing that the famous Arab explorers of the Middle Ages make no mention of it. El Masoudi was born in Baghdad at the end of the ninth century and died in 956; in his "Golden Grasslands" he left an interesting account of his travels, but with all his lengthy reports and observations, it seems that he only visited the coastal areas and was unaware of the ruins in the interior. This omission supports those who contend that Zimbabwe is of comparatively recent origin, or on the contrary, those who hold with Hammond Tooke that the memory of the dead cities had passed so completely from the minds of the natives during the period of El Masoudi that they failed to recommend a visit to them.

Consequently, whether or not Zimbabwe was visited in ancient times, the earliest references we have are those of travellers in the sixteenth century. The first to mention it is the Portuguese, de Goes, who was born in 1501. He did not see it personally but only speaks from the hearsay of native accounts; they described a large fortress rising up in the midst of the countryside, built entirely of broad, heavy, uncemented bricks. This tallies exactly with the appearance of the ruins of Zimbabwe. De Goes includes something which is now lost to us—an engraved inscription in the stone above the entrance, so old, he says, that no one knows what it means. He adds that in other parts of the plain there were similar fortresses which were built to protect the gold mines, and this would support the theory advanced by Perry. According to de Goes, these cities belonged to the king of Benomotapa, who was probably very powerful as the Portuguese tells us that he "keeps great estate, and is served on bended knees with great reverence".

No inscription has ever been found in the ruins or on the rocks of Rhodesia. Perhaps de Goes thought he saw the inscription he refers to in the double chevron design which adorns the eastern arch of the enclosure wall, just as Bent later thought he read an early Arab inscription in the accidental scratches of a schist bowl. The Portuguese historian de Barros, whose *De Asia* appeared in 1552, also speaks of ruins in Rhodesia. "The natives of the country call all these edifices Symbaoe, which according to their language signifies court. . . .

"When and by whom these edifices were raised, as the people of the land are ignorant of the art of writing, there is no record, but they say they are the work of the devil, for in comparison with their power and knowledge it does not seem possible to them that they should be the work of man. . . .

"In the opinion of the Moors who saw them, they are very ancient, and were built there to keep possession of the mines, which are very old, and no gold has been extracted from them for years, because of the wars. Considering the situation and the fashion of the edifices, so far in the interior, and which the Moors confess were not raised by them, from their antiquity and their ignorance of the characters of the inscription above the door, we may suppose that this is the region which Ptolemy calls Agysymba."

Nearly two centuries later, in 1721, the governor of Goa wrote, "Many affirm there is in the court of Monotapa a tower or edifice of worked masonry, which appears evidently not to be the work of the natives." Perhaps the story of Zimbabwe would have gone no further and no one would have thought of visiting the ruins if an ivory trader, Adam Renders, had not come upon them again by chance in 1868. His accounts gained the interest of experts like Karl Maunch, Thomas Baines, W. Posselt, Sir John Willoughby, and Theodor Bent, who followed him out. A considerable amount of effort was devoted to looking for legendary treasures and there was even a partnership founded under the title "The Exploration of Ancient Ruins Co.", whose motives were clearly not disinterested. The upshot of this false start was that the excavations, which were undertaken for profit, with no scientific method and no recorded reports, culminated in so much havoc on the site that the work of archaeologists was subsequently made very much harder. Zimbabwe had become the object both of greed and scholarly interest. The natives, on the other hand, could only approach it with a sense of reverence and religious awe. Posselt relates that when he arrived in sight of the ruins in 1888, his porters prostrated themselves and solemnly paid homage by clapping their hands. Great ancestral spirits were said to be living there, and indeed, the Baroswi had still been coming there some years earlier to offer sacrifices to the shades of the great kings. Maunch tells how black oxen were sacrificed there and Hall goes so far as to say that the last sacrifices took place in February 1904.<sup>1</sup> Africa, however, is a country which holds hard to its traditions; perhaps even now, when Europeans are not near to disturb them, the natives there still secretly observe their ancient rites.

The ruins must have appeared even more impressive then than

<sup>1</sup> *Great Zimbabwe*, London, 1905, p. 93.

they do today. Posselt's description is extremely compelling and the visitors who first roused the sleeping city are very much to be envied. "The main gate was ruined," says Posselt, "one part of it having collapsed. We climbed on the wall and walked right up to the conical tower. Inside there were thick bushes with tall trees rising above the undergrowth and masses of hanging creeper which we used to get down among the ruins. I found no human remains or implements, and our success was no compensation for our disappointment at finding no treasure. A heavy silence hung over the scene."

Posselt was wrong; a treasure was found and this was Zimbabwe itself, its mysterious culture and its ancient civilization. Some time after these visitors, whose only thought was for hidden gold, came archaeologists who gradually uncovered the ruins from the vegetation concealing them. There were excavations and studies, and the "Zimbabwe question" was soon being heatedly discussed, with some scholars challenging others in the great age they ascribed to the site. The most daring and sometimes even the most absurd theories were advanced, and the dead city of Rhodesia, which had perhaps been the capital of the king of Monomotapa, suddenly found itself among the main topics of the day. Systematic excavations were organized and the site was explored, layer by layer, by Hall and MacIver. It was MacIver's stratigraphic research more than anything else which first made it possible to establish a sequence of cultures and their antiquity, where all the work done before him had been for the sake of treasure. Furthermore, in the ruins of Mashonaland and Matabeleland, MacIver found the remains of ancient civilizations amongst which there were foreign objects—Persian and Chinese pottery and Arab glassware—interspersed with work which was typically African. His research in the ruins of Rhodesia was made easier by the very hard cement paving which isolated each layer perfectly and prevented the mingling of the soil. Finally, in 1928, Miss Gertrude Caton-Thompson—to whom we are indebted for an excellent book on the civilization of Zimbabwe<sup>1</sup>—was placed in charge of the site's excavations.

"The Great Zimbabwe buildings, for individual magnitude, skill and general extent," wrote Miss Caton-Thompson, "are the paramount group amongst the five hundred or so ruins popularly reputed to exist between the Zambesi and Limpopo." The great advantage of the site was that builders here could draw on an unlimited supply of granite which splits naturally into slabs convenient for their purpose. It was pre-eminently a grazing and agricultural centre, very fertile, equipped with good lines of communication, and pre-ordained by the very lie of the land to become a

<sup>1</sup> *The Zimbabwe Culture*, London, 1931.

great capital. It had a good climate for rearing livestock or for agriculture, there was enough rain for crops and there were watering-places in plenty. The first modern explorers of Zimbabwe did not agree on the dating of the ruins. MacIver maintained from objects he found there that not one was earlier than the fourteenth century, but he recognized at the same time that all the buildings were plainly African in character without any European or Oriental influence.<sup>1</sup> Hall,<sup>2</sup> however, believed in the great antiquity of Zimbabwe and claimed that MacIver's research had been concentrated on less ancient cities such as Dhlo-Dhlo, Umtali, Niekerk, Inyanga and Nanatali. Miss Caton-Thompson carried her research further afield to sites like Chiwona, Mshosho, Matendere and Hubvumi, and with the exception of Matendere, which had been previously studied by Bent and Hall, they were completely unexplored and were akin to the civilization of Zimbabwe. She also used the technique of aerial observation which was mentioned in the first volume with reference to the remarkable achievements of Père Poidebard. This method gave valuable results in Indochina, in Yucatan, in Syria, in the Andes and in Mesopotamia, and in South Africa once again the part it played proved specially important. It enabled Miss Caton-Thompson to distinguish ruins lost in the bush-land, but some of them are unfortunately so smothered by vegetation and so difficult to pick out from the granite around them that they are barely detectable from the air and impossible to find on returning to the ground. Miss Caton-Thompson concludes that the ruins do not go back much further than the Middle Ages (taking this period as beginning with the fall of the Roman Empire), and that they are typically native in every way; she does concede that foreign influences may have modified the essentially negro character of the architecture—probably the work of the Bantus, whose history and prehistory are for the most part still unknown. Hall, on the other hand, thinks that Zimbabwe is at least three thousand years old.

Perhaps we shall learn more when the ruins, which have so far only been marked out, are finally cleared. Unhappily, archaeological research in Rhodesia seems to be dogged by misfortune, an obstructive influence which brings work to a halt with a series of hitches just when it is about to show positive results. Possibly the dead kings of Zimbabwe wish to be left in peace; according to native legend, the dread Baroswi invaders destroyed all the old tombs in order to possess the wealth they contained, and scattered the remains of the ancient kings to escape their punishment for

<sup>1</sup> D. R. MacIver, *Mediaeval Rhodesia*, London, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> R. N. Hall, *Prehistoric Rhodesia*, London, 1909.

sacrilege. It may well be that the kings are still angry and are taking their revenge on modern explorers for repeating past wrongs.

The ruins of Zimbabwe consist of three main groups of buildings, but this does not represent all that there was of the town. It must have been made up of earth or wooden houses in kraals not unlike those of today, and spread out for the most part between the remains.

The group called the Maund Ruins (after one of the first pioneers of Rhodesian archaeology) chiefly contains the segments of elliptical walls—in which the stonework is faultless—with huge partitions, and rounded entrances flanked by semicircular bastions. The most remarkable thing about these walls is that they are discontinuous, they do not meet up with one another—and this is not because they have been partially destroyed; it is quite easy to see that they were originally built in this incomplete fashion, and a European's reasoning fails to grasp the logic or objects behind them. Taking the structure as a whole the main outlines of two walls with twelve gateways can be discerned, though this is still uncertain. The walls are made of blocks of granite, three to six inches thick, placed on top of one another without mortar and in comparatively even layers.

These walls, which end so abruptly and for no apparent reason, are connected to one another by an accumulation of the agglomerate mass known in South Africa as *daga*—a kind of cement made from red clay, particles of granite, excrement and ant-heap. The site is made up of six layers, the lowest of which consists of granite rock representing the virgin soil; above it and in sequence are a subsoil of yellow sand of the quaternary period, a layer of reddish earth containing archaeological remains, granite cement paving contemporary with the walls, a layer of red clay *daga*, and finally a layer of humus. At various points above the cement paving there are stonework banks which may have been hut foundations.

Pottery remains were found above the cement layer. They were hand-made, quite delicate, well fired and of reddish grey clay with an unembellished black varnish. The pottery found beneath the cement layer is rougher, also hand-made, but badly fired; it is reddish brown or dark grey, usually plain but sometimes decorated with diagonal lines. Iron weapons and implements have also been found beneath the cement. The mounds of *daga* contain pieces of both types of pottery as well as some iron objects, and one housed a stone structure resembling an altar.

Miss Caton-Thompson's research led her to conclude that there were two periods of occupation: one corresponding with the stone walls and cement paving, and the other represented by the mounds of *daga*; these were probably the work of a people who came to



*Fig. 9 Animal, clay vessel found in a cave near Great Zimbabwe*

occupy the ruins of the ancient city when it had already long been abandoned, and who used its buildings for their own purposes. Yet Miss Caton-Thompson did not attach sufficient importance to the periods corresponding with the layers beneath the cement, which contain evidence that the site had been occupied even earlier.

Without going back into Zimbabwe's prehistory (if we may be permitted to call it that) we can discern two different cultures in the Maund ruins. The first belongs to the so-called "Zimbabwe" period and is represented by the stone walls and cement paving. Huts stood on cement bases in granite enclosures made from the rocks of the area, which could be easily broken into slabs. The puzzling discontinuity of the walls can be explained if we assume that they were connected by wooden or cobwork structures which inclement weather may have destroyed. The huts were probably of daga or cobwork and built round a central pole like those of the present day.

According to Miss Caton-Thompson, what we know of Zimbabwe is the period leading from the peak of its development to its decline; all the earlier stages of its civilization remain unknown. Between Zimbabwe's decline and modern times the mode of large-scale building gradually degenerated. It is a typically African style and can still be found with exactly the same features as Zimbabwe's in the royal kraal of Banyoro. The style occurs elsewhere: in the ruins



of Matendere, in Nanatali (where there is the same arrangement of enclosure walls and internal partitions) and at Dhlo-Dhlo. The style has persisted (at Khami it appears in a radial form) even in the abandoned kraals of the Masibi reserve which were built comparatively recently.

Like the style of the architecture, the objects found in the ruins were typically African. The pottery was of the type still produced in the area and so were the weapons and implements. There is less certainty where bronze objects are concerned, and it seems generally accepted, as Miss Caton-Thompson has put it, that "skilled metallurgists as many African peoples have been, no unaided native mind, pure negro or Bantu, devised the use of metal alloys."<sup>1</sup> For this reason the famous and exquisitely made Benin bronzes are shown as the outcome of Portuguese influence in the sixteenth century. What is more, the bronze wire of an earlier period which was used for twisting into necklaces and bracelets was probably imported from Malaya.

If we have no definite knowledge of the earliest inhabitants of Zimbabwe, we know nothing of those who replaced them and left their daga buildings in the ruins. When the people of the second or daga period came to Zimbabwe, they found the town abandoned and in ruins. They settled there, and having no more idea than we have of the use of the walls, they filled the breaches in them with daga. They were unable to build with granite or to understand the advantages of a cement floor. Their pottery was much more roughly made even than the oldest Zimbabwe pottery. The men had their quarters in the splendid granite palaces, erecting their primitive huts on the mounds of daga which have been found there, and sometimes even making holes in the cement paving into which they thrust poles to fortify the mounds. Very much inferior to their predecessors, the newcomers probably belonged to a barbarous and warlike race and were no doubt attracted by the wealth of the gold mines. Perhaps it was the violence of their inroads which hastened the decline of the old empire and brought it to an end. The great city later regained its importance, however, and became a commercial centre, for in the group known as the "Eastern ruins", Miss Kenyon found a yellow cement hut on a granite base in which there was a large amount of local pottery mixed with Chinese porcelain of the Sung period. It is not surprising to find this evidence of contact with China for Chinese coins of the sixth to the twelfth centuries A.D. were found on other sites at Kilwa, Magadoxo and Mafia.

Whilst the Maund ruins consist of a number of dwellings or palaces, the ruins of the so-called Acropolis are probably those of

<sup>1</sup> *Op cit.*, p. 64.

the city's temple, which was built on higher ground. The Acropolis consists of a kind of confusion of rocks rising above sheer granite cliffs more than a hundred metres high. A steep path winds between granite walls and rises as far as the bastions, paved with granite flagstones. These buildings seem like massive, impenetrable fortresses which command the whole area.

Following Bent, Hall and Donslin, Miss Caton-Thompson set to work on the Acropolis in an effort to determine the layers corresponding with its different periods of occupation. In the temples and terraces of this extraordinary fortress she uncovered iron implements, fragments of pottery and schist vases, terra-cotta phalli and a vast amount of sheep, ox and goat remains. She also found some pieces of bronze and coloured glass beads in yellow, black, blue and green, especially in the heaps of daga which occur both here and in the open country. The pottery discovered in the terraces round the *Western Temple* attest in their shape, substance, polish, and sometimes even in their decorations, that the potters of Zimbabwe at some unknown period were technically and artistically very highly accomplished.

It is hard to say with any degree of certainty whether the Acropolis was the holy place, but it seems clear that its ruins are those of temples, and, though their real object is unknown, that is what they are called. The *Western Temple*, which stands at the western end of the Acropolis, is enclosed by a huge wall, 10 metres high and 5 metres wide, and is surmounted by four turrets. It shows the usual accumulation of daga as evidence of successive periods of occupation. The granite walls appear to have been decorated and the shape of a serpent can quite clearly be distinguished. Golden ornaments and the stone statuettes of birds were found in the debris, and in a lower layer, more than 3 metres below the present level, pieces of pottery, necklace beads and copper and iron implements.

A very curious structure made of granite blocks was discovered in the *Eastern Temple* and for lack of a more specific term, is called an altar; it is, however, similar to altars found quite often in Rhodesian mines. A kind of drain hollowed from the stone was doubtless a duct for libations. The altar was probably dedicated to a god of fertility, for lying round it there were many terra-cotta phalli, vases and schist birds.

In their material and architectural style, the temples of the Acropolis are identical with the buildings in the valley, especially the *Elliptical Temple* and the *Conical Tower* which so amaze Zimbabwe's admiring visitors. Where both groups are concerned, it is very difficult to say when they were built, but glass beads which were found there give the most specific and useful information.

Glass beads play an important part in modern archaeology, and in an appendix to Miss Caton-Thompson's book, Mr. Beck, a well-known expert on them, examines and describes the ones found in the remains of Zimbabwe. The study of glass beads now throws some very valuable light on the dating of the sites and leads to conclusions which were never dreamed of before the science achieved the method and accuracy it has today. Mr. Beck classifies the beads according to their colours and in this way can trace them back to their origins. The black beads are like those found in Egypt or in prehistoric European sites; but it is still necessary to decide whether their colouring was obtained with iron or manganese, for the first ones were found in contact with rock (the virgin soil, that is) whilst the others were higher. The lemon yellow beads resemble the ones found in some Southern Indian sites which date from about the eighth century. The red beads are similar to those produced by the Malays from the eighth to the ninth century. The blue are of the same type as the ones occurring in Malaya and India around the year 1000. Clearly, the age and origins of these beads make them very different; and the mystery of Zimbabwe, so far from being solved, seems even more baffling than ever.

We are no nearer to a solution when we go down from the Acropolis on to the plainland. That is where the most important remains are to be found—the ones which have made Zimbabwe famous and draw both scholars and tourists alike. The *Elliptical Temple* is a solemn, noble building, constructed with great skill from granite blocks; in its powerful restraint it is reminiscent of Stonehenge and even Egypt. Perhaps these stone buildings replaced early wooden ones which had gradually yielded to their age, and in other areas were copied in clay. In the Gwelo district, Hall and Neal found ruins whose layout and general appearance were completely identical with those of Zimbabwe, but because the town was made of earth and not stone, it was called the *Clay Zimbabwe*. Hall contended that the stones of the Acropolis were transported over a very great distance and this heightened the rather alluring aura of romance which prevailed whenever the great size of the buildings of the dead cities was brought into question. Miss Caton-Thompson, however, proved that the blocks were of the same granite to be found locally in a natural state. This splits into blocks quite easily—often under the natural action of sun or frost—and these can be conveniently used as they are; sometimes, indeed, they were used in great uncut, barely trimmed slabs, and where natural means did not make the stones required immediately available, it was not difficult to break them away with either fire or wedges.

The *Conical Tower* is the most remarkable of the Zimbabwe ruins

and it has occasioned some lively scholarly dispute. The immediate explanation for it which springs to mind when it is associated with the ruins' many phalli is that this curiously shaped tower owes its existence to a fertility cult. This view is held by a number of archaeologists but there are others whose opinions differ. Dornan thinks it is the superstructure of a tomb, Schlichter a gnomon, and Frobenius the symbol of an artificial termitary. As there was no tomb or foundation deposit to be found, and excavations underneath showed that the tower stood on solid ground without a substructure, the grave theory has to be ruled out. According to MacIver<sup>1</sup> the tower stood for the sovereign power of the chief. In the palaces of some African kings there are sometimes several earth cones, the largest of which represents the king, and the smallest either his wife or heir. The Conical Tower would thus be a much enlarged version of the symbolic cone, proportionate with the might of Zimbabwe's king. Apparently the Hamitic tribes of the White Nile have retained this custom; they plant elephant tusks around the cones and sacrifice oxen to them. Whilst the tower would seem to represent a very old African tradition, there are other scholars who hold that it was built comparatively recently and is modelled on Arab minarets. Those who maintain the great antiquity of Zimbabwe regard the tower as an equivalent of the Babylonian ziggurat.

Its enclosure is paved with granite flagstones, covered with a layer of cement. There are four gateways, which, curiously enough, Bent, when he arrived in 1891, found walled up. We may well ask why the inhabitants of a city should go to the trouble of walling up its gateways before deserting it. As the same thing is to be found at Matendere, we can advance a variety of interesting theories to explain it but they can do nothing to lessen the mystery which surrounds the dead cities of Rhodesia. The tower has suffered further damage since it was first visited by Europeans. It no longer has the lace-like stone embellishment at its top to which Maunch called attention. Excavations in its substratum have uncovered stone implements of the quaternary period—skilfully cut flakes which would suggest a neolithic age in Zimbabwe's prehistory. Can we assume from this that the site was occupied at a time long before the *Elliptical Temple* and the *Conical Tower* were built?

Our bewilderment increases as Frobenius, studying the architecture, associates it with similar remains, also built of granite, in southern India near Hampi. This would seem to support those archaeologists who claim that Zimbabwe was not built by the negroes but by other races who provided its architects—possibly Chinese, Persians, Arabs, Malaysians or Hindus. The theory is a

<sup>1</sup> *Mediaeval Rhodesia*, London, 1906.

perilous one, for the remains of Zimbabwe, on the contrary, appear to be typically negro; Miss Caton-Thompson has even recognized them as "the product of an infantile mind, a pre-logical mind."<sup>1</sup> In fact—characteristic of the race.

The other ruins discovered in Rhodesia show a direct relationship with Zimbabwe and those of the Sabi reserve warrant special mention. They came to Miss Caton-Thompson's attention in 1928 in the region of Buhera, and she subsequently explored them. At Chiwona Kopje, on a hill 250 feet high rising from the plain watered by the Sabi and Nyazidza, she found granite architecture, pottery and clay phalli—all like those of Zimbabwe; but there was one special feature which occurs nowhere else: part of a vase made of polished black graphite with a bas-relief frog. At Gombe, in an awe inspiring granite massif with cliffs 700 feet high, there are some huge walls, three monoliths as yet still unexplained, and some cairns made of heaped stones. These ruins are customarily associated with fortresses which the Baroswi are thought to have built as a defence against the Matabeles. They were probably later than the period of Zimbabwe though they remain within the same tradition. Where the age of the Matendere ruins is concerned, there does not seem to be any greater evidence of agreement. Bent claims that they are contemporary with the period of Zimbabwe's decadence whilst Hall thinks them later. The site has enclosure walls which form an incomplete ellipse, and these are decorated with lace-work and herringbone motifs. The gateways, as we said before, were walled up. Unlike Chiwona, it seems improbable that Matendere was primarily intended for defence. It is more likely to have been the kraal of a chief for it contains hut remains. As in the temples of Peru and at Stonehenge, the planning of the gates was no doubt in relation to the sun's position at solstice. The pottery found there was undistinguished, but on the other hand, there were a great many opaque glass beads—more than 1,000 specimens in all colours—together with objects in bronze and copper.

Mshosho is a site occupying the crown of a granite kopje, and its huge buildings and strategic position give it the appearance, like Chiwona, of a fortress. The walls are undecorated, and the little pottery found there was brown or grey and of a rough quality like that of Matendere. The excavation of the site must still be completed before any attempt can be made to date its ruins. We cannot work on the evidence provided by glass beads because every known type is represented—from those of Mesopotamia in the ninth century B.C., to those of present-day Sudan. Here, as everywhere else in Africa, it is traditionalism which makes dating such a problem.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

In the district of Bikita, about a hundred kilometres from Zimbabwe, stand the ruins of Hubvumi, rising above a granite kopje 50 metres high. This is a very confused group of ruins, complicated still further by granite faults which could be mistaken for corridors and collapsed walls. Small gold balls, bone tubes, amulets marked with cuts which must be the characters of writing, and many glass beads have been found there, as well as the perforated earthenware objects bearing symbols like those on the famous wooden vase from the cave of Zimbabwe; they are similar to the divinatory vases which the Ba Venda still use. The Ba Venda, on whom Hugh Stayta wrote an important study in the appendix to Miss Caton-Thompson's book, may well be the descendants of the ancient builders of Zimbabwe; the ruins of Dzata, which are in Venda country, are very much like those of the *Elliptical Temple*. Then again, shell disks have been found at Hubvumi like those worn by the Mashona today.

Dhlo-Dhlo is situated in Matabeleland, fifty miles north of Bulawayo, on a granite plateau 1,500 metres above sea level. It has often been visited since the end of the nineteenth century by treasure hunters, who have, indeed, actually succeeded in finding some skeletons and a few objects in gold. For some time, the excellence of their design and their decorations (among which many kinds of astronomical symbols have been recognized) made these important ruins seem more interesting than those of Zimbabwe. After MacIver's explorations in 1905, there was such great enthusiasm for Dhlo-Dhlo that its ruins were regarded as the most extraordinary find in South Africa.

Dhlo-Dhlo's ornamental façades are indeed the product of an artistic power far beyond the range of anything to be seen at Zimbabwe. In its handling of space and masses, the art of Dhlo-Dhlo shows greater brilliance, greater subtlety, greater exuberance of imagination, but less nobility than that of the Conical Tower. The dating of the ruins is subject to a number of conflicting theories. The most commonly held opinion is that they belong to the second period of Zimbabwe. Hall distinguishes two types of building there: the first probably of Sabaeen origin and dating from 2000 to 1100 B.C.; and the second of Phoenician origin, from 1100 B.C. to Christian times.

At the upper level there is cement paving which consists of successive layers with a maximum thickness of two feet. The cement is mixed from granite dust and pieces of ant-heap. It was reinforced with wooden poles, and hut foundations and the traces of a fire can still be recognized in it. At the lower level, the discovery was made of a Chinese Ming vase of about 1700—broken but with all its parts complete—bronze bracelets and necklaces, and—most curious of all—a square glass bottle, probably Dutch, of the eighteenth century.

There were also some very finely made earthenware bowls, a large number of glass beads, iron needles and bone amulets.

The stone age layer lies beneath the historical levels, and its flint implements and roughly made pottery make it seem very important. No doubt there are some surprises in store for the authorities on prehistoric times when this level—as yet untouched by excavation—is fully cleared at Khami, Chiwona and Matendere.

At this point we should mention the discovery of the tombs of Mapungabwe, which is directing South African archaeology into new channels. According to widespread negro tradition in South Africa, a king of Zimbabwe came to inspect Mapungabwe, his main garrison town, died during his visit, and was buried there at the top of a hill. For the negroes, the site of the royal tomb remained shrouded in an aura of fear and veneration, and the dread of ghosts prevented them from venturing anywhere near it.

Fear protected the tombs from robbers and for that reason they were discovered intact; their funeral suites, containing a great wealth of objects in gold, were preserved untouched. The outstanding items were a golden sceptre, a rhinoceros statuette of very delicate workmanship, necklaces, gold wire, and an interesting variety of precious objects from which we can learn a great deal about the art of the region's native craftsmen. The skeletons found in the tombs do not seem to be Bantu in type. The site has been studied by Professor Leo Fouché of the University of Pretoria, and it will probably lead to the complete revision of everything we know about the ancient arts and skills of South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

What are we to conclude from the knowledge we have been able to obtain so far? It seems that there are close links between Zimbabwe and the Bantus, and by examining the traditions which the Ba Venda inherited from their ancestors, the builders of Zimbabwe, we may possibly find a solution. The fall of Zimbabwe civilization was probably the result of internal dissension, the division of the great kingdom into independent tribes, but its origins remain even more mysterious than the reasons for its eclipse. If the Bantus built its stone cities, a remarkable change in their civilization must have occurred, for they did no building in stone before they came from Central Africa to the South.

It also seems unlikely, though it has sometimes been suggested, that the nearby gold mines were the reason for Zimbabwe's high cultural achievement. There is a legend that some native kings, recognizing that their wealth was attracting a host of outsiders, destroyed the mines to prevent them from being the downfall of their people. In spite of this, it was an important commercial centre and

<sup>1</sup> See Leo Fouché's *Mapungabwe, Ancient Bantu civilization on the Limpopo*.

within reach of the Arab, Persian, Hindu and Chinese trading ports which had been established along the coast. The Hindus always appear to have obtained a great deal of gold from South Africa long before the coming of Europeans, and it seems likely that the Egyptians also knew of the mines; but no one can say whether there is any truth in the tradition that Solomon used gold from this area in building the Temple at Jerusalem.

"The mystery of Zimbabwe", says Miss Caton-Thompson, "is the mystery which lies in the still pulsating heart of native Africa."<sup>1</sup> We are still some way from solving it completely. All memory of Zimbabwe lies in old African tales which relate how the ancient Baroswi kings heaped mountains on one another in order to build it. The greatness of the kings of the historic period emerges from the part which legend attributes to them, among other things, in its rise. There are still many other native legends of great empires now dead, with huge remains, buried under bush or forest, which no white man has ever seen.

Study of the ruins always reveals the most extraordinary contradictions. As an instance of this, one can hardly fail to be astonished by the resemblance between the sculptured birds on columns found at Zimbabwe and quite different from everything else we know, and similar birds from Roquepertuse in Provence. The natives in Posselt's expedition had great reverence for these stone birds, which are possibly symbols of lightning (worshipped by the Ba Venda), and they tried to kill the white men for moving them. The rosette cylinder, which was found in the *Elliptical Temple*, has its counterpart at Paphos in Cyprus. The wooden bowl found in the cave at Zimbabwe lends weight to the Semitic theory, for the crocodile at its base and the signs of the zodiac which decorate its edges are similar to Assyrian work.

Though we are so far unable to determine the origins or dates of Zimbabwe's civilization, we can recognize two clearly distinct cultures which are defined in a passage by Schonfield. This is worth quoting as a summary of the present state of the problem and its positive solutions.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 10 Soapstone bird from the walls of the temple at Great Zimbabwe

<sup>1</sup> *Op cit.*, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> "Zimbabwe", *South African Journal of Science*, December 1926.



"The First Culture was very simple. There is at first no trace of trade with the coast. Gold seems to have been unknown and other metals scarce. The people lived in pole and daga huts with thatched roofs; their pottery was hand-made and very rough. They surrounded their kraals with dry-built stone walls, and they raised by slow degrees the walls of the Acropolis from a mere parapet, six feet high and three feet thick, to a wall 30 feet high.

"The old interior walls of the Temple ruin and the lower floor levels are also the work of this people.

"On purely negative evidence, I believe this culture culminated before the Portuguese conquest, and that the Zimbabwe described by de Barros and de Goes was probably what we now call the 'Acropolis' and possibly the Temple without its girdle wall.

"The Second Culture, which is represented by deposits generally less than 5 feet in depth, is almost certainly due to the Baroswe. There is, at present, no evidence from which we can decide whether it is a development from the First Culture or an intrusion by alien people—all the most striking features of Zimbabwe belong to this period, such as the girdle wall of the Temple, the great west wall of the Acropolis, the soapstone birds and stelae, the phallic emblems, the gold ornaments, and an abundant evidence of trade with the coast.

"We must regard, therefore, the great walls of Zimbabwe as the finest and latest architectural achievements of that Bantu civilization the beginnings of which are lost in the mists of Rhodesian pre-history, and which was finally broken up at the beginning of last century. Nothing has yet been found which can be ascribed to a greater age than the last medieval period, and until sure evidence of later civilization is unearthed, it seems sheer waste of time to tax our ingenuity with endeavouring to father on other peoples a civilization which has such obvious Bantu affinities."

This was written long before the Mapungabwe discoveries. We have said that the skeletons found in the tombs on this site were not Bantu in type. Could they belong to the mysterious race of Red Men who feature in Africa's most ancient traditions? There can be no disputing the ties which Mapungabwe's gold plate shows with Egypt. At all events, in 1937, a site previously unknown was discovered at Gwanda, Southern Rhodesia. It revealed huge walls, a rock mass covered with 134 mortar-shaped cupules with stone pestles scattered about them ("cupules" present one of the most intriguing and controversial problems of archaeology), gold beads, a smith's anvil, miniature reproductions of an object which may be phallic (it could well be the Conical Tower of Zimbabwe), and remains of mesh clothing which call both Egyptian and Phoenician work to mind.

On the other hand, some of the twenty-seven skeletons found buried in a sitting position in the royal tombs of Mapungabwe must have been wearing a kind of gown made of gold and glass beads which had remained intact where the cloth itself had vanished. Here at Mapungabwe, and for the first time, the discovery was made of a mould for producing glass beads. Though everyone until now had imagined that the beads were imported, this proved that the skill was a native one.

That is how this question stands at the present time. There is little to be said of Zimbabwe's antiquity and the civilization which the city so strikingly represents except that several cultural periods undoubtedly followed one another on the same sites; if we have so far failed to determine the necessary sequence even for relative dating, it is because "treasure seekers" threw the remains into disorder and stratigraphic study becomes very difficult where excavations have been undertaken with no thought for system. A reaction now seems to be developing against the opinion which denies Zimbabwe the great antiquity claimed for it by native tradition. This has become recognizable as scholarly distrust of the information provided by legend, a conscientious reluctance to be carried away by the romantic enthusiasm which favours dating as far back in the past as possible.

We cannot blame archaeologists for being overcautious or meticulous, but their refusal to accept the great age of the ruins of Zimbabwe seems undermined by discoveries like Gwanda and Mapungabwe. We are still a long way from knowing what part the Bantus played in the cultural development of South Africa; but just as the Aztecs, who until recently received all credit for the civilization of Mexico, were recognized as the comparatively modern invaders of a land with a culture a thousand years old, so the proof of Zimbabwe's cultural antiquity will one day be discovered. Perhaps the key to the mystery is no longer in Zimbabwe, but in the remains of ruined walls in some inaccessible stretch of forest, or on a hilltop where passing feet have hewn a path to an ancient royal tomb. From this site, unknown to archaeologists and unrecalled even by the African tribes who preserve such time-honoured traditions, the amazing story of their ancestors' splendid achievements will one day be brought to light.

## CHAPTER IV

### MESOPOTAMIA

"THIRTY YEARS ago the name Sumer would have conveyed nothing to the average person. Today there is something called 'the Sumerian Problem', which for archaeologists at least, is a source of constant speculation and controversy."<sup>1</sup>

These were the terms in which Seton Lloyd, one of the archaeologists most active in the excavations of Mesopotamia, summarized the question as it stood in 1936. Fifty years ago, indeed, little more than a surface layer had been studied in Mesopotamia. The Babylonians and Chaldeans were discussed almost as vaguely as they were by the ancients, whose minds were uniquely exercised by thoughts of Semiramis, Ninus and the Tower of Babel. Many fields of exploration have been opened in recent years. New sites have become available, and most important of all, investigations under ruins already known have revealed other ruins and still others beneath them. This descent in time through layers full of pottery, statues and the remains of palaces and temples is like a pilgrimage through whole civilizations.

The cultures of Mesopotamia, which were thought to be of such great antiquity, went back even further than anyone had imagined. Then, when virgin soil had apparently been reached, new investigation or perhaps mere chance revealed—at an even lower level—the remains of another epoch, unknown until now, and rich in works of art and records. . . .

Archaeological research was made very much easier when Iraq was placed under the British Mandate. European scholars could now work more freely in an area previously subject to a perverse Turkish government. Regions which could only be reached by dint of long and difficult travel were now made easily accessible by new railways and air routes. Where an archaeologist had formerly spent months in travelling to and from the site of his operations, the same place is now only a few days from London or Paris.

The new facilities which scholars now enjoy and the publicity their discoveries receive—especially since the fabulous wealth of the royal tombs of Ur attracted public interest to a sphere hitherto restricted to experts alone—have favoured exploration in Meso-

<sup>1</sup> *Mesopotamia*, London, Lovat Dickson, 1936.

potamia to such an extent that today there is no other country which has been more actively, systematically or successfully excavated. Mesopotamia is the archaeologist's promised land. The fascinating spectacle of reclaimed cities, the emergence of unknown races in areas believed uninhabited, the presence of advanced civilizations in periods thought barren of culture, the astonishing progress which each discovery brought to the history of art, the history of religions and to general history itself—all make this country a focus of universal attention.

The tombs of Ur have become as famous as the tomb of Tutan-khamen, and the names of the pre-dynastic sites, less lavish of course but scientifically of even greater value, have made common knowledge of the civilizations of Jemdet Nasr, El Obeid and Uruk where even scholars fifty years ago were unaware of their existence.

In broad outline, that is the state of Mesopotamian archaeology today. In periods and places already known new excavations have shed fresh light, completing inadequate data and modifying what was accepted as certain. In layers where no human dwelling had ever been thought to exist the remains of very ancient civilizations take us several levels deeper into the past. There can be no question of accepting the Sumerians' legendary dating—according to this man lived in anarchy for 259,000 years between creation and the time when kings came down from heaven to earth, bringing an end to chaos—or of admitting the longevity of some of their kings, exceeding even Methuselah's extraordinary age. Yet with no room for doubt, we are compelled year by year to revise our knowledge of the ancient dynasties, and still further, what we know of the prehistoric and protohistoric times before them. Oriental excess prevents us from giving full credit to texts which attribute a reign of 24,519 years, 5 months and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days—even with such care for accuracy—to the twenty-three kings of the first dynasty of Kish. But what did we know of Kish around 1900—and what fantastic discoveries await us tomorrow?

Mesopotamia is made up of the lower basin of the Tigris and Euphrates, which have their sources in the mountains of Anatolia and empty into the Persian Gulf. Rivers—the Nile, the Indus, the Tigris and the Euphrates—gave rise to all the great civilizations of the East in the ancient world, and this is true of modern civilizations as well: for them the Rhine and the Danube were great connecting links, powerful vehicles by which influence was extended.

Babylonia became dependent on its rivers as Egypt was dependent on the Nile; they determined the nature of the soil, and in that way, the character of its civilization. If a people inhabits a mountain region or alluvial land, if they tend herds or crops, the direction of

their life will vary accordingly, and with it, not only their customs but their whole philosophy of existence and the after-life, their funeral rites, their religion and their art. Lower Mesopotamia, an alluvial land which takes in Sumer, Babylonia and Accad, is destitute of stone and has practically no wood. The evolution of its arts and skills was therefore destined to be quite different from that of Upper Mesopotamia—Assyria—which was close to mountains and possessed wood and stone. Architecture conformed with the materials available. The Babylonians built in bricks—either dried in the sun or baked in a furnace—whilst the Assyrians were able to use their stone. Scarcity of wood compelled the inhabitants of the alluvial land to make up for the beamed ceiling with the invention of the brick vault and arch. It is even thought that the vault is simply a translation in terms of brickwork of the primitive hut, which consisted of bundles of reeds, meeting and attached to one another at the top. But although Northern Mesopotamia and Southern Mesopotamia were crossed by the same rivers, their respective climates were different; in this we must recognize another important factor which determines the life and thought of a people.

Organically and psychologically, a nation varies according to its degree of self-sufficiency. A people obliged to import the necessities of life will have a bias towards trade. It is impossible for it to live in "splendid isolation": mentally it reacts to commercial exchange; it becomes more sensitive to outside influences—better equipped to adapt its customs, ideas and modes of action and creation by taking examples from its neighbours. The need to import forces it to export in order to establish a balanced economy; this in turn leads it to vary the ways in which it exploits the natural resources of its country if it has any, and to create them if none exist. But a nation which can export absolutely nothing in exchange for the goods it has to import will find itself compelled to go to war; this, in short, is the only means for it to obtain from its neighbour—and without expenditure—the goods it cannot buy. In this way, its nature deriving from the land it lives on, a people will choose work or war, peace or conquest. Its religion will be equally affected, and the gods it worships will be the ones most capable of meeting its life's needs.

Mesopotamia was not always what it is today. "In the Old Stone Age," writes Seton Lloyd, "the head of the Persian Gulf extended as far as a point some way north of modern Baghdad where the Tigris and Euphrates run nearest together. Far down in the south, a third river, the Karun, coming from the Persian mountains, discharged into the sea, bringing down with it as much silt as the other two combined, and at a point precisely opposite on the other side of the Gulf a fourth did the same. These two threw salients of

mud out into the sea, which eventually met and formed a bar across the Gulf. With the scouring action of the tide no longer effective, the silt from the two larger rivers began to fill up the area north of this bar until it turned from sea to lagoon and from lagoon to marsh-land. Then gradually the marshes dried, and where once had been salt water there soon appeared a vast tract of rich alluvial soil. The land of Shumeri, of Sumer, now lower Mesopotamia, may be said in this way to have emerged from the sea at a time when a pluvial period in the Near East was rapidly giving way to a new arid régime, and many neighbouring countries were becoming less and less habitable."<sup>1</sup>

Over the centuries, the courses of the great rivers changed several times. Floods were the outcome, and some of them, very extensive and terrible in their effects, have survived in legend as the myth of the Deluge. We find it in Babylonia in the story of Udanapishtim, as well as in the Bible where Noah plays the same part. Traces of the flood can be recognized in huge deposits of mud which covered whole provinces in certain periods and brought a total halt to the evolution of their civilizations. Was there only one flood or were there a number of disasters of a similar kind? It is difficult to be certain, but we can say without fear of error that the cataclysm, though it may not have been general, was none the less terrible in the destruction it wrought if we are able to judge by the sense of terror it left in legend and by the ruins which archaeologists have discovered. There is little likelihood that all mankind was wiped out with the exception of Noah, his family and his animals, but a number of regions were cruelly stricken whilst others escaped—perhaps because they were higher than the plain-lands.

The flood was perpetuated in Sumerian tradition as the time of complete change which wiped out all previous periods and re-created mankind. The modern theory, which holds that there were a number of smaller local floods, contrary to the ancient belief in a universal calamity, seems confirmed by the fact that the layer of mud in different areas does not correspond with the same degree of civilization. Thus, at Ur it separates the so-called El Obeid period from the period of Uruk, whilst at Warka it only appears after the period of Jemdet Nasr and at the very beginning of protodynastic times. At Kish, on the other hand, it does not occur until the end of protodynastic times to reappear in the Uruk period at Nineveh and Aparchiya. We should add that there are no traces of the flood at El Obeid, at Tell Asmar or at Khafaje. One could of course conclude that these various sites were at different cultural levels when the disaster took place, but then again, it is not difficult

<sup>1</sup> *Mesopotamia*, p. 14.

to imagine that there were local floods which destroyed lowland towns and spared those situated on the highlands.

Excavations in Mesopotamia were begun little over a century ago, first by the French consul Botta, at Nineveh in 1841, and then by the Englishman Layard at Nimrud in 1845. Though it is not possible to relate the story of these excavations here, there is a very full and very remarkable account of them in the excellent book by L. Speelers, *Les Fouilles en Asie antérieure depuis 1843*. In this book, the scholarly Belgian archaeologist covers the entire period from 1843 to his date of publication (1928) with a description which cannot be summarized and is still immensely valuable. Seton Lloyd's more recent book, *Mesopotamia*, which we have already referred to, can also be profitably consulted, as well as monographs, published reports, and especially the very fine works by André Parrot, *Découverte des mondes ensevelis*, Paris, 1952, and *L'Archéologie mésopotamienne*, Albin Michel, 1953.

The remains of the ancient cities which were scattered over Mesopotamia occur in the form of *tells*—mounds made up of the heaped debris of towns built over one another. The explanation for the development of these tells is that, starting from the level of virgin soil, each successive city was content to raze the remains of its predecessor and build over them. In this way, the town of Erbil or Arbela, said to be the most ancient in the world, forms a mound about a hundred feet high, and this contains the remains of numberless cities which rose above one another. If we take into account the fact that alluvial deposits have been causing the surrounding land to rise, it is possible to appreciate the huge expanse of time which the succession of cities must have covered. They were not always intentionally destroyed although this was usually what occurred. In some abandoned cities, the houses fell into ruins; this happened fairly quickly because they were made of mud and clay, and crumbled so easily under the force of wind and rain that the new inhabitants were compelled to erect new walls over the heaps of debris. The silting up of canals, which played a vital part in irrigating the land, and invasions, in which everything was laid waste, sometimes led the inhabitants to desert their cities. The modern archaeologist consequently finds himself in towns which were plundered and burned by the enemy according to custom, or which were abandoned by their citizens, who bore away everything they could carry, leaving objects which were too bulky or of little value.

Today these objects of little value give scholars their greatest satisfaction. A fragment of pottery from a broken vase, thrown among the rubbish by a housewife, sometimes indicates more than a



Terra-cotta head from Ife, Nigeria





Stele of Tell Ahmar, Ishtar on the lion, eighth century B.C.

statue, and what we know of Mesopotamia in particular has chiefly come to us from these two sources. A superficial observer might regard them as trivial, and they were all too often ignored during the period when even for outstanding archaeologists, excavations were largely treasure hunts. These fragments of bricks and pottery now enable us to date a site exactly. According to the firing of the porcelain, the quality of the clay, decorative features, colour and, of course, form, we can establish to which period it belongs. Bricks also tell their own story and this will vary according to form, size, manufacture and baking; thus, when we find plano-convex bricks, we can say that the building is predynastic because this type of brick was completely dispensed with at the advent of the first dynasties. Since tells are always scattered with bricks and pottery fragments, there is nothing easier than dating their surface layers, and by probing more deeply, reaching back to the most ancient civilizations as more bricks and fragments of pottery are unearthed to give evidence of the earlier buildings which occupied the site. A chance incident can completely upset the layers' normal order; some archaeologists, for example, carelessly throw the remains they have dug out into a well, without subsequently taking the precaution of showing in the usual way that the site has already been excavated, so that newcomers may be saved from wasting their time.

From the middle of the third millennium, the bricks used for temples and palaces usually bore the name of the king who had had them built, and a dedication was often inscribed on them as well. Seton Lloyd quotes the example of a valuable discovery made in the early excavations of a tell in the region of Baghdad which was previously unexplored; it is now famous in the history of archaeology as Tell Asmar. One brick bore the following inscription: "Ibiq-Adad, mighty king, enlarger of Eshnunna, shepherd of the black-headed people, beloved of Tishpak, son of Ibalpel." In this way a simple clay tablet indicated the name of the town, Eshnunna, the name of the king, Ibiq-Adad, and of his father Ibalpel, the name of his god, Tishpak, to whom the building was consecrated, and finally designated the "black-headed people" he ruled, for that is how the Sumerians are sometimes described. On the same site it is easy to recognize the different periods of construction during which the kings had worked—altering or enlarging old buildings—for every brick bore the builders' names. Whilst Tell Asmar, thanks to this discovery, was identified immediately, the site of Khafaje, where excavations were begun at the same time, kept the secret of its name for five years, despite the efforts and ingenuity of those exploring it, simply because the layers unearthed only contained uninscribed bricks. It was finally identified as ancient Akshak.

Statues, especially those bearing inscriptions—like the one which made it possible to identify Mari—are very valuable sources of information. Tombs, however, with their funerary treasures, offer a very faithful picture of the life of the people because the objects they used were buried with them. It was this fact which held world attention, even among the sections of the public normally indifferent to archaeological research, when Sir Leonard Woolley published an account of his discoveries at Ur.

The custom of foundation deposits, which were very substantial in temples and palaces, and more modest in private dwellings, has also provided valuable information. They furnish immensely important historical data by mentioning those who dedicated them, and the gods or spirits under whose tutelage the new building was placed. This custom has been preserved, amid a curious mixture of superstition and formality, in the laying of the foundation stone; today, of course, this has no magical significance, and can have little more point than to provide future archaeologists with historical data. If we remember that children were sacrificed in ancient times when a very ordinary house was being built, and that there is a legend of sacrifice associated with almost all the large buildings of the Middle Ages—palaces, cathedrals and bridges—the fact that coins bearing the image of the reigning king are placed in foundation stones no longer seems so innocent or “documentary”, and appears to be the outcome of a curious transference.

In Mesopotamia, as everywhere else, fragments of pottery and bricks, whether inscribed or not, represent the most characteristic evidence of the earliest human settlements, for they are the immediate expression of a race, a reflection of its material needs and first aesthetic tendencies. Thanks to them we know today of peoples and phases of civilization of which archaeologists were completely ignorant at the beginning of this century. Following these new discoveries, we have had to revise what we had accepted as certain where the ethnography of the Mesopotamians, their languages, their religions, their customs and their art, were concerned. Perhaps one of the reasons for the fascination exerted by archaeology on anyone who follows its progress is a constant need to bring his knowledge up to date. There is no other scientific field in which discoveries follow one another so rapidly, sometimes completely demolishing an edifice of firmly accepted beliefs. One must be ready at all times to admit that one was wrong when new excavations invalidate a theory or contradict the results of earlier research. That is what the true scientific spirit should be.

The ruins of Ur are on a plain twelve miles south of the Euphrates, which at one time flowed right under the walls of the city. In those

days the plain was wonderfully fertile, and where we now see desert there were the cultivated fields which gave Ur its wealth. In 1853, Taylor, the English consul at Basra, began excavations in the great body of remains which indicated the site of an important city, but as the ruins of Ur did not yield what was being sought at the time—works of art, especially sculpture—the importance of this mass of bricks was not recognized and they were soon abandoned. Taylor had nevertheless found valuable evidence which made it possible to identify the site with the ancient Ur of the Chaldees: the so-called Nabonid cylinder-seals.

In 1920 Dr. Campbell Thompson led a survey of the tell, and on the strength of its report, Dr. H. R. Hall undertook the excavations which, from 1922 onwards, Sir Leonard Woolley actively continued on behalf of the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania.

One could not wish for a more competent or conscientious director of operations than Sir Leonard Woolley; as soon as he recognized the site's importance he proceeded no further for fear that valuable ruins might be damaged if they were excavated by unskilled native workmen. Thanks to his caution, it was possible for the excavation of the tombs to be continued later with the minute care for detail to which we owe the art treasures and incalculable historical information yielded by the ruins of Ur.

At the very beginning of his research, he discovered a burial-ground in which the funeral accessories were so remarkable that he was unwilling to go on until he had created the conditions necessary for success and had assembled all the information he required to date and identify his finds. It was only after sedulous study of all the data provided by excavations on other Mesopotamian sites that he began work on the burial-ground, where digging eventually uncovered over six hundred graves. This served to confirm the very great antiquity of Ur's civilization, and some sensational discoveries soon put the expedition on the track of the Royal Graves.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Leonard Woolley had so far cleared 1,850 tombs, and by examining them, was able to establish the following sequence: first, the predynastic tombs, earlier than the third millennium before Christ; then the tombs of the first dynasty of Ur, situated around the year 3000; the group of tombs of the so-called second dynasty; and finally, the tombs of the Sargonic period—about 2500. The mode of burial was quite simple; the corpse was either placed in a wooden, clay or reed coffin, or merely rolled in matting. But

<sup>1</sup> There is a great deal of writing on the excavations at Ur. The best work to consult is by Sir Leonard Woolley, particularly his monumental *Ur Excavations*, *Ur of the Chaldees*, and *The Sumerians*, and a book by C. J. Gadd, *History and Monuments of Ur*.



*Fig. 11 Golden dagger with sheath, found at Ur*

the discovery of the Royal Graves revealed a burial-ground of very great wealth.

It began when a workman found the famous gold dagger and dressing-case in 1926. We do not know whether these objects were placed in the earth covering the tomb or whether robbers who rifled it had inadvertently dropped them: the funeral chamber which was cleared did not in fact contain anything more than copper pots and a small gold leaf. The dagger, however, was so beautifully finished and in such exquisite taste that it betokened a very highly advanced civilization. The members of the expedition were now stimulated by the hope that they would find other graves which would this time be intact and, in 1928, the discovery of tombs which have since been so often described crowned the scholars' long and difficult work with success.

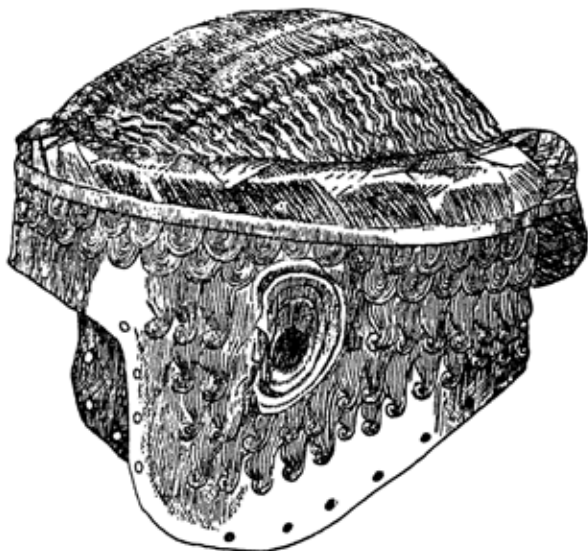
What they found were huge, complicated tombs like underground

dwellings, with several brick-vaulted chambers, in which the furnishings were as important as those of the Egyptian tombs. It was a thrilling experience when electric torches were shone through holes in the brick roofs to reveal the first intact tomb, full of skeletons and copper vessels. In order to reach it they had had to empty a square pit full of debris, and this took them from the surface of the ground to the burial-vault itself. Various objects were mixed with the debris as though offerings had intentionally been placed there whilst the pit was being filled. Found among them were two gold daggers, a seal bearing the name of Meskalamdug, a king, and the body of a woman, probably a servant who had been sacrificed during the filling. In the funeral chamber, however, there were the bodies of four servants stretched out by the body of a woman wearing a magnificent crown and holding a golden vessel to her mouth.

It was assumed that this woman must have been someone very important at the Court of Meskalamdug, and eventually, in the course of their work, the archaeologists found two other intact tombs; from their rich funeral furnishings and the number of servants who had been sacrificed, it was clear that they could only be the tombs of kings. In the first one, indeed, the sloping corridor from the funeral vault to the surface was completely blocked by the bodies of soldiers with gold and silver lances who were wearing copper helmets. There were also the remains of two chariots harnessed with oxen, accompanied by their drivers, and the bodies of nine splendidly dressed women, covered with jewels of gold, lapis-lazuli and cornelian, and holding harps. According to cylinder-seals found near the dead man for whom the tomb had been built, his name was Abargi. The adjacent tomb belonged to his wife, Queen Shubad.

Apparently she wished to take her whole court with her into the after-life, for she was accompanied by ten ladies-in-waiting, five soldiers and the drivers of the sledge drawn by two wild asses. The wealth and beauty of the objects buried with Shubad beggar even the most rapturous descriptions; the funeral furnishings have to be seen in London, Philadelphia and Baghdad for an understanding of the high level of art, culture and civilization which the Sumerians achieved during the third millennium. Indeed, the cruelty of human sacrifices cannot detract from the exquisite workmanship of the harps, chariots, lamps and vessels; their material value is nothing compared with the astonishing art of the goldsmiths and jewellers who made them. Shubad's head-dress, which has so often been reproduced, is a masterpiece of imagination and refined taste.

Still more tombs were found, among them that of an unidentified king, surrounded by the bodies of six men and sixty-eight women,



*Fig. 12 Golden wig-helmet from Meskalamdug*

one of whom had not had time to put on her crown, which was found in a pocket of her dress.

You may wonder how all these servants and soldiers died, for their bodies were arranged in perfect order at the bottom of the pit, and none of them showed any sign of a violent death. As each corpse held a copper goblet, Sir Leonard Woolley argues that this must have contained poison. It is now possible to assume that the funeral procession followed the king's body down into the tomb and was arranged, according to order of precedence, around the holy remains. All then drank the poison which would enable them to go with their master into the kingdom of the shades. We have no idea of the Sumerians' conception of the after-life, but it seems quite probable, if we are to judge from their funeral procedure, that they imagined life in the other world as similar to the present one, and believed that the dead man should be equipped with everything necessary for his use and comfort.

A short distance from this unidentified tomb, another was found which was that of a child; the body of the unknown princess was surrounded by a full miniature funeral suite, scaled to the size of her small skeleton. Finally, Meskalamdug himself—"King, Hero of the Good Earth"—was found wearing the superb golden wig-helmet which is as famous today as the sarcophagus of Tutan-khamen. No one had been sacrificed with him, but a row of spears

had been driven into the ground round the hearse—inadequate to preserve it from the irreverent curiosity of archaeologists.

When a museum visitor examines the splendid treasure of Ur, he cannot conceive of the work which had to be done before he could see them as they appear. More often than not, the brick vault had collapsed under the weight of the debris filling the pit, and the objects crushed beneath this mass were so completely mingled with the spoil earth that the delicate operation of extricating them could only be done with a penknife point and a toothbrush. The harps which can be seen undamaged, the head-dress arranged on the heads of dummies, and wonderful masterpieces like the mosaic standard, the chariot decorations and the "ram caught in the bush", could only be removed and cleaned with the very greatest difficulty. In the *Illustrated London News* of the 21st September, 1929, there is a photograph of the ram as it was when it was found—crushed, flattened and mixed with the earth—side by side with another showing it as it can be seen today at the British Museum, a triumph of art and imagination, and with its paws and muzzle in gold and its lapis-lazuli fleece, a wonderfully finished piece of workmanship.

In the terrible confusion of the remains, copper, gold, precious stones, skeletons, weapons and pieces of furniture, massed together with clay and bitumen, there was sufficient to deter even the most intrepid explorers. Yet with miraculous patience the archaeologists cleaned and restored every object, bringing back the airy lightness of the gold wire crowns, reconstructing—though the wood had disappeared—the beautiful harps which only wait for the touch of a hand to produce once again music which has not been heard for five thousand years. The beauty, the perfect state of preservation and the new condition of these objects arouse immense admiration, suggesting nothing of the minute attention to detail and the strict scientific accuracy—for they had to be restored exactly as they were—which were the underlying principles for their repair. We can never be sufficiently grateful to the scholars who accomplished this work.

The tombs discovered at Kish are similar to those of Ur, but though they show the same burial procedure, with the sacrifice of men and animals, their funeral furnishings are not as rich or as beautiful. But Kish is of great historical importance, and the excavations carried out there make it the most prolific site—after Ur perhaps—in the whole of Mesopotamia.

Excavations at Kish began in 1922, led by Professor Langdon on behalf of the University of Oxford and the Field Museum of Chicago. "Situated about eight miles east of Babylon, it consists



really of twin cities, Kish and Harsagkalamma, separated by the ancient bed of the Euphrates. Its combined extent is something like five miles long by two miles wide, and apart from other ruins, contains the remains of no less than three ziggurat towers. Of these the great stage-tower of the western city, called 'Unir-Kidur-Mah', 'House of Admiration, the far-famed abode', dated from the first Babylonian dynasty (about 2150 B.C.), and is dedicated to the War-God Ilbaba and his consort Ishtar. The other two occupy the western end of the group of mounds called by the Arabs Ingharra, and form part of the ancient city of Harsagkalamma. Both of these have a core of those plano-convex bricks which ceased to be used at the time of Sargon of Akkad and must therefore date from earlier Sumerian dynasties."<sup>1</sup>

As far back as 1923, Dr. Mackay discovered the western ziggurat and burial-ground A of the pre-Sargonid period; in the meantime, tell W was providing a rich library of Babylonian tablets. These discoveries were completed in 1925 and 1926 by the clearing of the great temple which was covered by the tell of Ingharra, but this did not bring an end to the excavations because the discovery of the site of Jemdet Nasr and its predynastic pottery diverted Professor Langdon's attention to a new centre of research. Complemented by the finds of 1928, the ceramic remains of Jemdet Nasr soon provided a valuable Key by which to determine the sequences of the predynastic civilizations.

Charles-Louis Watelin continued Professor Langdon's work at Kish, and more especially in the tell of Ingharra, where he uncovered ruins of a temple founded by Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century B.C. But as earlier excavations in Mesopotamia had shown that temples were constructed over one another in successive periods (which was what happened at Uruk, for example), he concluded that beneath these comparatively recent ruins there were the remains of temples which were even older. Investigation proved him right. Descent into the tell, under Nebuchadnezzar's temple, revealed a temple of the period of Larsa and another of the Sargonid period.

But Watelin did not end his research there. In the following year he bored under the Sargonid ruins, which dated from about 2750, found water at a level about 15 metres under Nebuchadnezzar's temple, but without being deterred by this obstacle, he went on until he reached virgin soil, that is, about 5 metres below the level of the water. As a result of this, he was able to draw up a plan of the vertical section from the virgin soil to the neo-Babylonian temple,

<sup>1</sup> Seton Lloyd, *Mesopotamia*, p. 42.

that is, from about the fifth millennium (to which he attributes the earliest pottery) to 600 B.C.

The importance of a discovery of this kind can be readily appreciated. It seemed even more important when a layer of fine sand containing shells and small fishes was found among the successive strata. These were remains from the flood referred to in so many Mesopotamian legends and in the Bible as the story of Noah. Whether it was local or general, the flood occurred at Kish in about 3300 B.C., and the periods before and after it are clearly recognizable.

This made it possible to distinguish the following sequences: between the virgin soil and the present level of the water, a Sumerian-neolithic civilization, characterized by pottery similar to the type found at Jemdet Nasr, whose name was accordingly given to this period. There was no copper; it only appeared in the next layer up, which was that of a civilization which has been placed between 4000 and 3400; there were still some flint implements as well as the copper tools. Graves with human and animal sacrifices were also found there, as well as funeral furnishings like those of Ur. All this was covered by sand from the flood and then there was a layer of clay or crushed brick known as the red layer; possibly it represents the outcome of a subsequent flood or the remains of a destroyed brick temple. Evidence of the Accadian civilization appeared in the form of the Sargonid temple.

This continuity is extremely interesting because it proves that Kish was inhabited as far back as the Jemdet Nasr period and that Sumerian culture here was succeeded by that of the Accadians. These cultures correspond with the presence of different races. Indeed, the human remains found in the layers preceding the flood are plainly Sumerian, that is to say, of quite pronounced Armenoid type and round headed. Moreover, we have an excellent idea of what the ancient inhabitants of Kish were like from the famous painted pottery head which was found near the surface of the tell but obviously belongs to the fourth millennium (which shows that the presence of an object in a particular layer is not enough to date it). It is thought that the Kish head was preserved by the inhabitants, either for its rarity or its value as a work of art. It is an immensely intriguing work with its reddish yellow skin and black beard; its long straight nose, its receding chin and round head make it a perfect Sumerian type, which is all the more apparent when it is compared with the Semitic type of the Accadians by whom Kish was later to be occupied. The general relief of the face and the treatment of the eyes in particular relate it to the statues found at Tell Asmar in 1934.

In 1930, Dr. Henry Frankfort, director of excavations for the

Chicago Oriental Institute, found two new sites, Khafaje and Tell Asmar, which proved very important and shed considerable light on the art and civilization of the first Mesopotamian dynasties. If we add the discovery of Ishschali in 1935 and Tell Agrab in 1936, we have a broad view of the most productive Mesopotamian sites. Furthermore, where temples are concerned, Khafaje is as important as Uruk; Tell Asmar has revealed the shape and ruins of a city as complete and full of information as Pompeii or Ostia; as for Ishschali and Tell Agrab, the traces of Sumerian civilization are closely bound up with the influences of the Indus culture, so much that these two places can be regarded as the links and perhaps the prehistoric centres of exchange between India and the Mesopotamian delta.

The ancient city of Akshak once stood on the site now known as Khafaje, and the remains of many successive occupations are to be found there. Research was made difficult because unauthorized excavations on the tell had opened trenches and pits into it, confusing its sequences and complicating archaeological work. The ruins of a temple were cleared, nevertheless, and because of its shape, it is known as the Oval Temple—one of the most remarkable buildings in the whole of Mesopotamia. It is not strictly oval. Its inner enclosure, which contains the ziggurat and the outbuildings of the sanctuary, is almost circular, whilst the outer enclosure is more elongated. It seems unlikely that the nature of the ground determined this odd arrangement, which is not to be found in any other Mesopotamian city; it must have been dictated by some religious symbolism of which we are unaware but which could no doubt be explained if we knew the god to whom the temple was dedicated.

Among the objects found at Khafaje, one of the most remarkable is a bas-relief of the protodynastic period which portrays what is probably a military procession or the presentation of offerings or tribute to a king sitting on his throne. Ethnically, those who appear in it resemble the Kish head, the statues of Tell Asmar, the figures in the bas-reliefs of Ur or the mosaic standard, for example, but their style of dress is quite different. This plaque was broken into several pieces and one of them was missing. Almost all hope of completing the plaque had been abandoned when it was recalled that a fragment found at Ur corresponded exactly with the empty space. One can only wonder by what strange chance two cities more than 150 kilometres apart came to possess the pieces of a broken bas-relief. This curious state of affairs is still a mystery to archaeologists, who have not yet been able to advance any valid theory in explanation.

Among the objects found in the ruins of the Oval Temple, we should mention three magnificent copper statues which probably served as supports for offering tables or censers. Their workmanship is perfect; the Sumerian artist used almost pure copper and cast his work according to the technique which is today called the "cire perdue" process. This is probably all that remains of the plunder which robbers removed from the temple, for some statues were found outside the enclosure wall of the sanctuary, and they were wrapped in a piece of material as though the thief had concealed them there, hoping to return and unearth them later on. Fortunately, his forgetfulness or some chance event which prevented him from recovering his treasure made it possible for us to admire a masterpiece of the art of Khafaje, of which, up to 1936, it was almost the only example.

In 1936 in fact, P. Delougaz cleared the ruins of the "unknown sanctuary", so called because the name of its guardian divinity has still not been discovered. The layout of the temple is very interesting, and the recesses with which it was decorated are an architectural detail which warrants some attention. If there were very few objects connected with worship preserved in the Oval Temple, the Unknown Temple provided a great many which today enable us to define the civilization of Khafaje more exactly. It contained, in fact, a collection of cylinder-seals on some of which there was the delicate ornamentation of the Jemdet Nasr period; in a number of other seals there were some strikingly naturalistic animal portraits; and with their heraldic stylization, the cylinder-seals of the Uruk period are not unlike the pottery designs of Susa II. The comparison becomes more obvious when we examine the pottery of Khafaje which was discovered during the most recent expeditions. The loveliness and peculiarity of the so-called red pottery (in fact the specimens of it are black, red and yellow) lie for the most part in the combination of the Metope style which is to be found in Elam—the technique of enclosing the picture in a kind of frame—and stylized animal figures which are quite close to the spirit of Elam if not absolutely Susian pottery forms. The geometric stylization of a living figure which we find at Susa is replaced at Khafaje by arbitrary, inconsistent and extraneous distortion. At the artist's whim or through some obscure symbolism, trees grow from goats' backs, and the backs of gazelles are spiked with teeth like a comb. Then vegetable themes, which are so rare in Elam—they are more often found at Tepe Moussian which is further towards northern Persia—play a part in the pottery of Khafaje which we are as yet unable to define.

It would seem that the artist of Khafaje enjoyed greater liberty

in his use of decorative themes on pottery; there is also evidence of his invention in the technique of inlaying stone vessels with jasper or mother of pearl and setting them with bitumen or red ochre to give a delightful polychrome effect. We cannot leave Khafaje without a reference to the libation vessels shaped like birds and bulls, which, together with the amulets and the animal statuettes used as bases for offering-tables, bear a stamp of perfection in animalist art. They show a realism which we observed previously in the seals, and which is more strikingly apparent in the stone statue of a woman—technically and stylistically unique in the Mesopotamian art of this period. She is marked by an austere, direct realism in which there is nothing of the rather spectral grace, for example, of the statues of Tell Asmar. The woman of Khafaje has a prosy, everyday plainness which the artist reproduced with remarkable fidelity, imbuing the stout body and prominent face with life and character perhaps unmatched in Mesopotamian sculpture.

The excavations at Tell Asmar began at the same time as those of Khafaje on a site quite near to it. Archaeologists succeeded in establishing that it contained seven periods, one above the other, each of which showed its own building methods, its own style and its own taste. The ruins of a city were uncovered, and their state of preservation was good enough to convey the way of life of the ancient inhabitants of Eshnunna—for that was what they called Tell Asmar.

The houses of the Accadian period, which it has been possible to distinguish from the ones preceding them and from those built on their ruins later on, are so well preserved that Seton Lloyd says, "They provided one with a picture of town life 4,500 years ago which corresponded in almost every detail to that of the modern Arab village: one house remained standing high enough for the arches over the doorways and the small grilled-windows to be intact, and one would only have needed to re-roof it to make it a habitable Arab home, complete with bread-ovens, hearths, pottery and other household utensils. The street outside was indistinguishable from any of the meaner streets of Baghdad."<sup>1</sup>

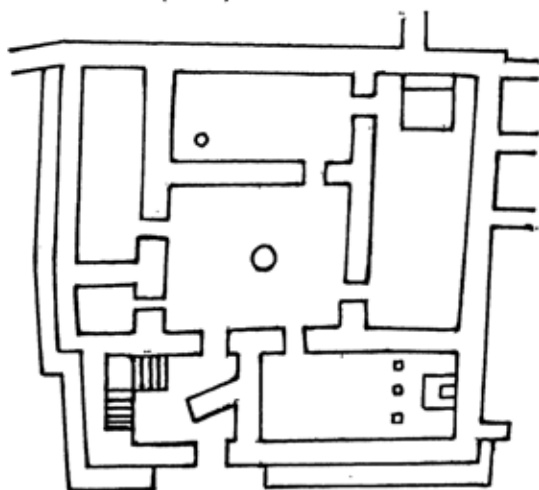
If that was what the houses of modest citizens were like, there were also palaces at Tell Asmar; the one shown by Seton Lloyd in a diagram<sup>2</sup> was of truly royal proportions. You will find it intriguing to study the way in which the rooms were distributed and particularly to note those customarily associated with the modern idea of comfort. Bathrooms especially were equipped with much thought for comfort. Excavations have shown that Eshnunna was

<sup>1</sup> *Mesopotamia*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Op cit.*, Figure 2.



Fig. 13 'Archaic' temple of Abu (above) and 'Square' temple of Abu (below) at Tell Asmar



inhabited from the period of Jemdet Nasr, because beneath the layers containing pottery of that type there was virgin soil.

The main holy building of Tell Asmar is the temple dedicated to Abu, the god of vegetation. According to the findings of research on the site, it was probably rebuilt twenty-five times during the different periods which archaeologists have been able to identify, and all this reconstruction has caused so much confusion and overlap that it is very difficult to say with any certainty what belongs to each period. In its earliest form it goes back to the very origins of Eshnunna; then it was a small sanctuary rising almost immediately above the virgin soil; fifteen metres of debris accumulated above it, in the course of centuries, to form the tell.

A study of the architectural variations of the temple of Abu for each of the twenty-five times it was rebuilt is out of the question. We can only say that at the beginning it consisted of a single room with an altar, a pedestal for the statue of the god, and a kind of oven adjacent to it which was probably intended for some form of

ritual. This original form was altered gradually until it contained a number of halls, as we know it in the stage called the square temple.

Its ritual furnishings increased and grew more elaborate as the architecture of the temple became more complex. There are altars, offering-tables, stone animal statues, alabaster vases and a number of human statuettes, but these were still not enough for an estimate of the Eshnunnians' art until the chance discovery of a hiding-place revealed the cellar containing the wonderful statues which are recognized today as the most precious discovery of the Tell Asmar excavations. Seton Lloyd's description of this find is so vivid that it is actually possible to imagine oneself present when these fantastic images were unearthed.<sup>1</sup> "The floor upon which they stood had been carefully cleared and the room photographed, and the men were beginning to penetrate beneath it in search of an earlier floor level, when the writer's attention was called to an old Turcoman who was working in the corner between the altar and the wall. His knife had just broken through a crust of clay and revealed a large cavity beneath the floor. With the aid of a match one could see some way into this, and it was an amazing sight which met the eye. On top were three clean and almost undamaged alabaster statues, with the light of day gleaming on the lapis-lazuli and polished bone of their inlaid eyes for the first time in five thousand years; while disappearing into the darkness beneath were the black-painted beards and tresses of others crushed beneath their weight. It took two days to disentangle and extract them. At the end of that time twelve almost undamaged statues of men and women had come to light, including a kneeling, naked priest, unique in Sumerian art. With them were several small amulets, and for some reason a great quantity of smooth white pebbles. Finally, lying side by side at the bottom of the shaft were the first cult statues ever found in Sumer, a god and goddess very nearly half life-size, and of awe-inspiring appearance. Both were distinguishable from their worshippers by enormous inlaid eyes, reminding one of the 'all-seeing eye' of old religious pamphlets."

This discovery has considerable artistic importance; a whole period of Sumerian art, unknown until then, was given expression through these remarkable statues, in which a compulsive vitality is further enhanced by the huge eyes described by Mr. Seton Lloyd. They have a truly terrifying appearance, and in the shadow of the sanctuaries, with the light gleaming on them, a worshipper must have known the awe we can still feel today. The statue of a priest which Mr. Lloyd refers to is very different; it is a realistic image, amazingly true to life, and remarkably close to the art of the Indus.

<sup>1</sup> *Op cit.*, p. 102.

But the statues of the gods, with their highly stylized faces, their huge noses standing out from low foreheads, their jet-black hair and beards, and above all, the unearthliness of their eyes, suggest the tendency towards abstraction which is evident in Byzantine statues. If we wanted to relate the god of Tell Asmar to some familiar image, the only way would be to place him beside the weird Pantomimoi, whose huge and terrible eyes also shine in the half-light of their basilicas. Perhaps this was the visible form which Abu chose to assume. As the god of vegetation, to the Sumerians—mainly a farming people—he was worshipped as the bringer of fertility. In his temple, which was covered by a brick vault, a curious discovery was made: in a vessel dating back to about 2500 B.C., there were fragments of an iron dagger. When we remember that the earliest iron object known till then was a dagger offered to Tutankhamen and found in his tomb (which dates about a thousand years after Tell Asmar) a discovery in Mesopotamia which antedates the first discovery of iron by ten centuries can be regarded as a sensational event.

No less astonishing was the Accadian cylinder-seal illustrating a legend like that of the Greek Hercules. It shows a hero attacking a seven-headed hydra and, like Hercules, destroying it with fire. That, at all events, is the interpretation which Dr. Frankfort gives it. The legend of a hydra living in swamps probably represents the fever which flourishes in marshlands and can only be purged when fire dries up the moisture. It therefore seems not impossible that the hydra of the Mesopotamians and that of the Greeks shared the same origin, and in both cases, as so often happens, legend may have conferred heroic proportions on a simple farming operation intended to increase the fertility of the fields.

The *raison d'être* of a curious little sanctuary which was uncovered by the excavations remained in doubt until the discovery of two large cauldron-shaped vessels—similar to the ones sometimes used as sarcophagi; as they contained no bones this theory had to be rejected. But the strange ornamentation of the vessels, on which there is a kind of relief frieze depicting animals and men attacked by reptiles, made it possible to recognize them as the containers which were occupied by the sacred snakes. Thus, at Tell Asmar, as in Cyprus, Crete and Syria, the snake was considered holy and to be venerated. Since these containers were in a sanctuary which was probably a private chapel, it can be concluded that the snake must have been worshipped as a household divinity and protector of the home. Regarded as a being from the underworld, as a creature of the soil it would also have been associated with fertility rites and that would explain why its cult is almost everywhere related to that



of the bull, which is the commonest and most obvious fertility symbol.

One of the most curious objects found in the ruins of Tell Asmar is a clay tablet which was probably used for sketching by a local artist. It shows the shape of a zebu similar to the ones so often depicted in the seals of Mohenjo-Daro. This new evidence of frequent contact between the art of Mesopotamia and the Indus confirms what we knew of the exchanges between these two areas, and would encourage the belief that in an even earlier period they shared a common culture; that is the theory towards which scholars increasingly tend.

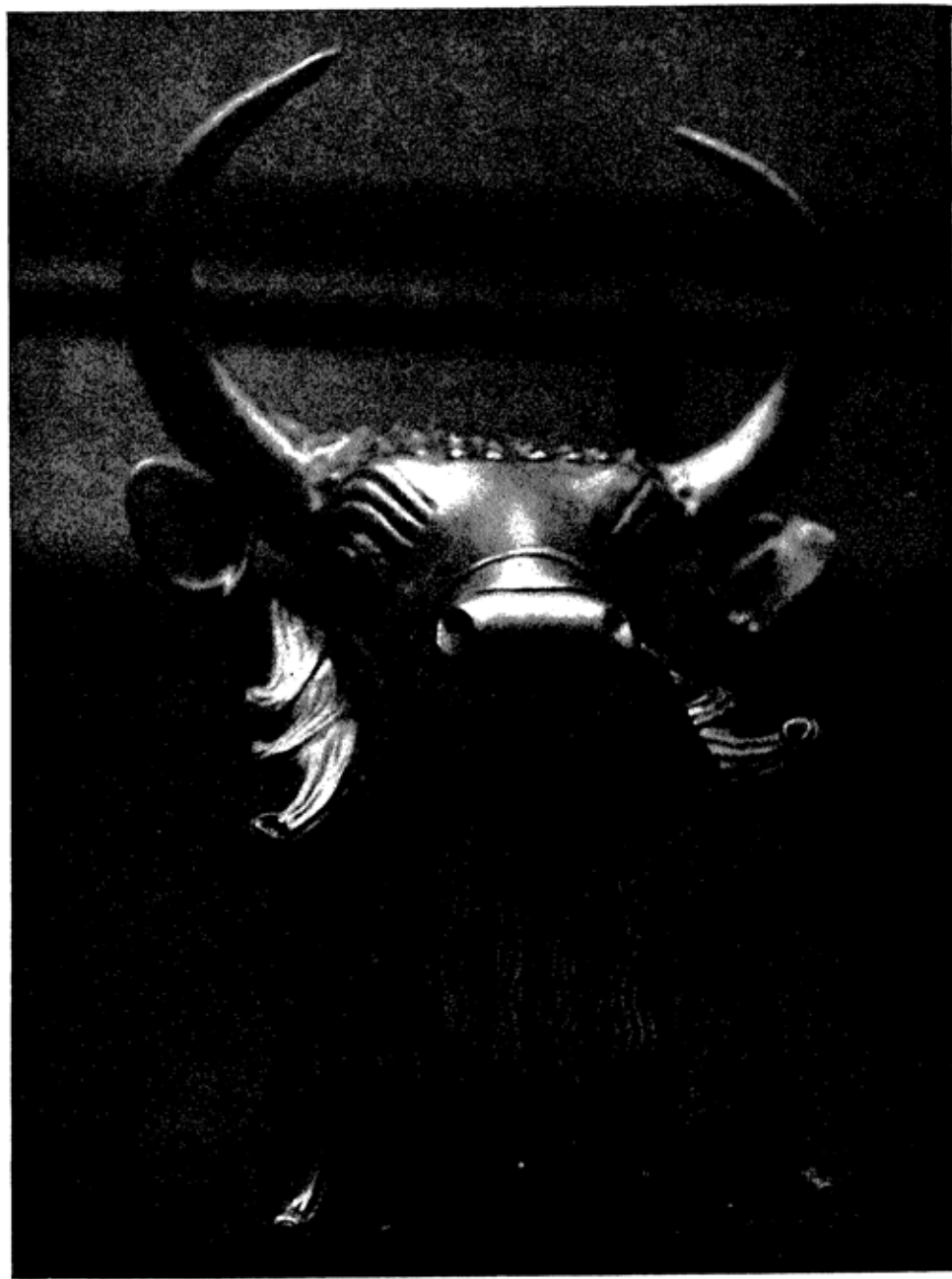
On the site of Ishschali, an alabaster monkey statuette was found, curiously resembling an image at Mohenjo-Daro. In their attitude, relief and general feeling, the similarities of these works are too great to allow for a chance meeting. It is to be hoped that Dr. Thorkild Jacobsen's next discoveries will confirm what is at present assumed where the relationships between Ishschali and the Indus are concerned. So far the most valuable discovery made on the site is the wonderfully preserved temple of Ishtar-Kititu. With its large halls, its niches, and its walls, in which salients and recesses provide an extremely subtle kind of architectural decoration in light and shade, it is one of the most beautiful and least damaged of the sanctuaries of Mesopotamia.

But the city in which the influence of the Indus civilization is most abundantly obvious is Tell Agrab. Mr. Seton Lloyd's excavations there have already extensively cleared the ruins of private houses and temples. Among the most curious objects to be observed there are several hundred mace-heads which were probably used as weapons by the temple guards and are as astonishingly varied in their shapes as in the materials from which they were carved. Most of these stones, as well as those of the necklaces found at the same time, are unknown in Mesopotamia, and it has reasonably been concluded that they were imported from the mountains of Iran.

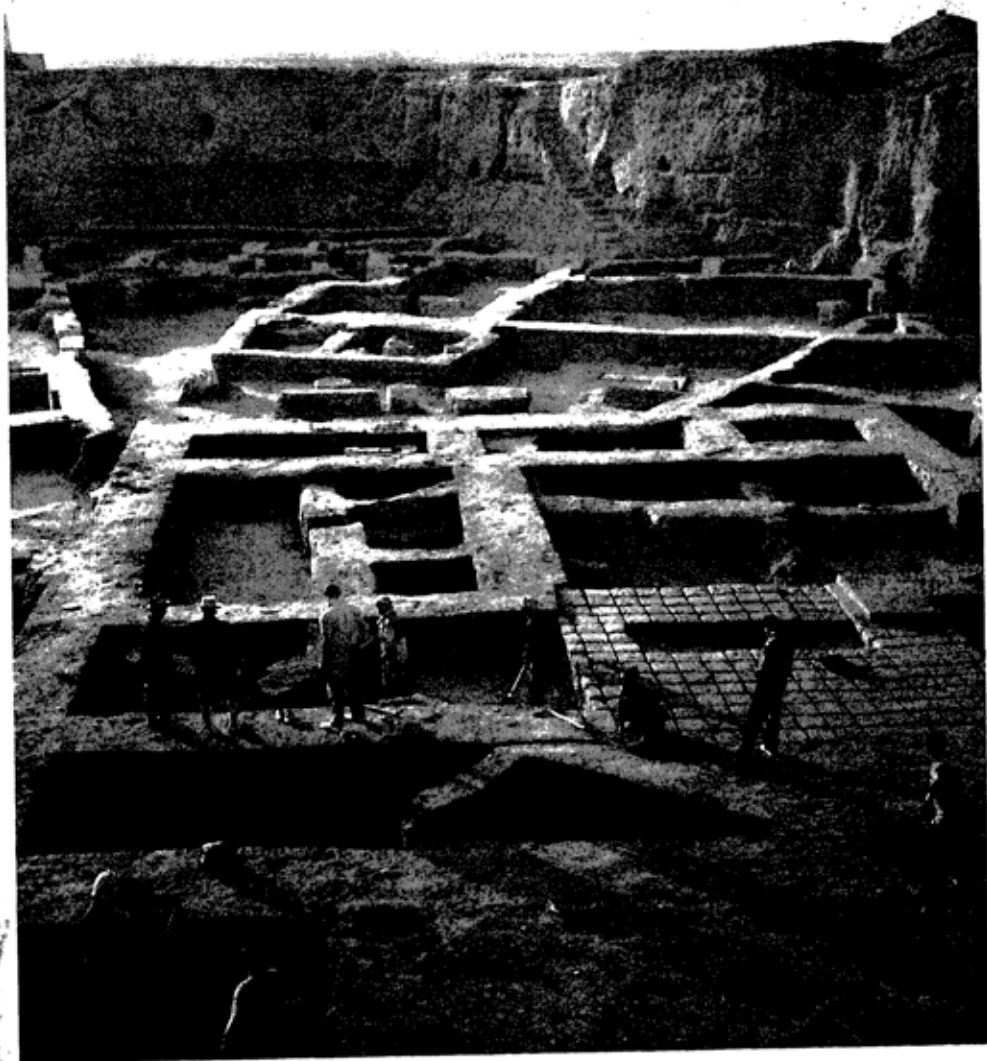
The sculptors of Tell Agrab had achieved rare perfection in the art of carving stone; a remarkable specimen of their work is the head of a woman wearing a complicated turban, the relief of which is extremely skilful. Even without the inlaid eyes and the bitumen hair showing beneath the head-dress—which attest Sumerian artists' general liking for polychrome effects—its relief and the extraordinary vitality of the face alone make the work a supreme example of naturalistic truth. Stone vessels sculptured with human and animal figures, and a variety of statues—some of them closer to the style of Tell Asmar whilst others show the simplicity and grandeur of the images of ancient Greece—testify to the



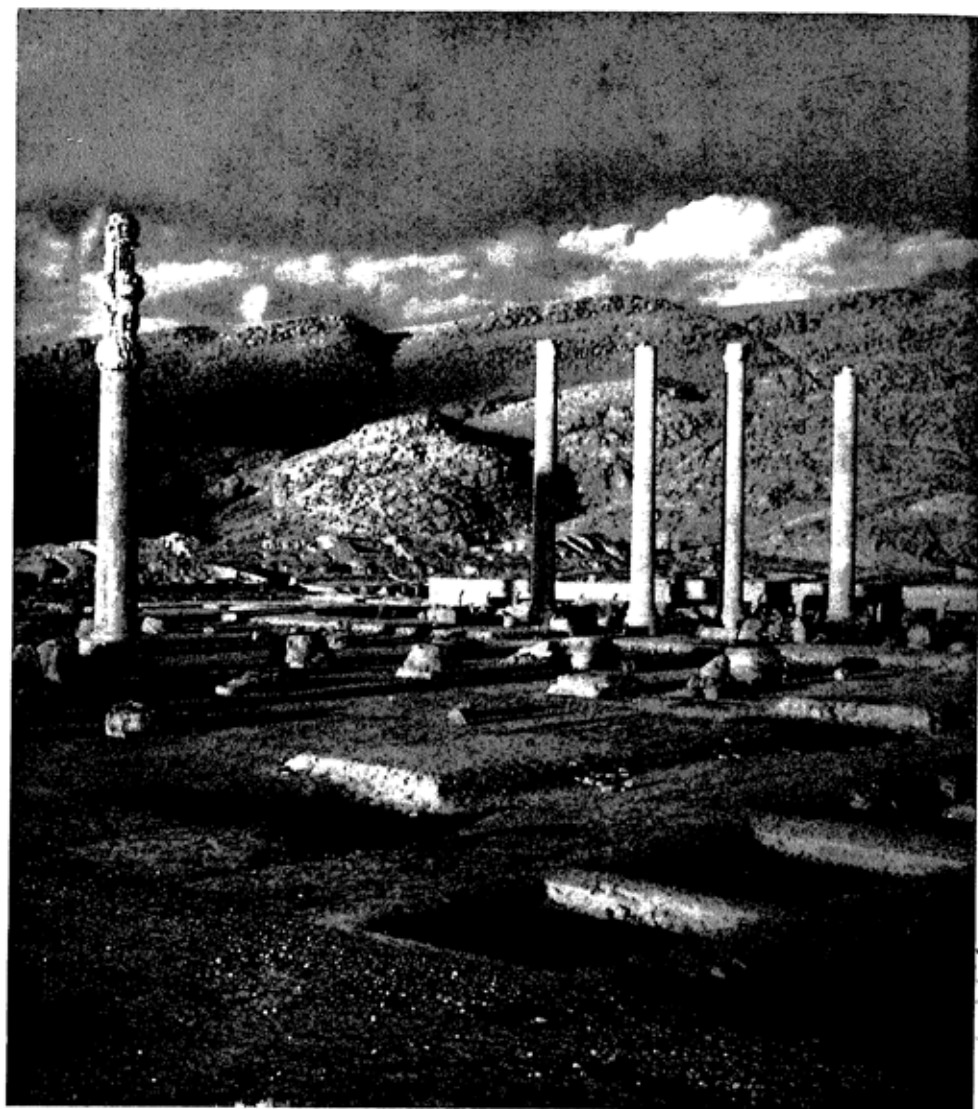
Bas relief of Ur Nanshe, Mesopotamia; limestone, third millennium B.C.



Head of a bull in gold, Ur in Chaldaea



Excavation site at Susa, French archaeological expedition



Persepolis, the Library, from the Apadana

eclecticism of the inhabitants of Tell Agrab. Perhaps no other Mesopotamian site has yielded such varied treasures in so short a time. There was even the head of a woman with curly hair, of pronounced Semitic type, and with a smile so vividly and curiously evocative that it cannot be related to any of the styles of the period or the country. We need to turn to the art of Crete in order to find something comparable to this unique piece of sculpture.

The zebu, a favourite subject for the artists of the Indus and an animal they held sacred, reappears here once again, although as a living creature it was certainly unknown to the inhabitants of Tell Agrab. A fragment of a soapstone vase depicts a zebu—exactly like those carved in the seals of Mohenjo-Daro—within a kind of temple. The influence of the Indus is here very much in evidence and even the green stone offering vessel, despite its lions and kerub-faced bull, is by no means restricted to Mesopotamian elements alone. There is a syncretic quality within this work which is obviously the result of the contact and fusion of several civilizations. Up to now Mesopotamia has been regarded as the original source of the earliest cultures; we must now look elsewhere for this source, probably in the direction of Asia, and possibly further afield than the Indus or Baluchistan. Whilst it invariably recedes further into antiquity with every fresh discovery, we are still confronted with civilizations already very advanced, and can only conclude that they took hundreds and even thousands of years to achieve this level of culture. In this respect Ishschali, Tell Agrab and Tell Asmar are probably even more prolific than Ur or Kish, though these sites are far from exhausted. But in the wonderland of Mesopotamia, surprises of every kind are possible and we can never foretell what future excavations will yield. They may uncover civilizations like those of the predynastic period which bore the signs of an advancement never believed possible in prediluvial times.

In this connection, we can say that it was one of the most important moments in the history of modern archaeology when Sir Leonard Woolley, penetrating to an even greater depth than the royal graves, made his way through the substrata of Ur until he found evidence that the site had been occupied long before proto-dynastic times. He was now faced with a new field of exploration and an all-absorbing spiritual adventure in which, as he went deeper into the ground, he was taken back thousands of years to extinct cities and civilizations of which history had kept no record. It was then that he found the three predynastic and prediluvial cultures now known by the names of the sites where their traces were first discovered—El Obeid (or Al Ubaid), Uruk and Jemdet Nasr.



*Fig. 14 Ram caught in a bush, found at Ur*

The wealth and beauty of the funeral furnishings in the royal graves of Ur showed that the civilization which produced them was culturally very advanced and had achieved the height of technical perfection, possessing a certainty of taste and a vigorous yet subtle aesthetic judgment quite foreign to primitive man. Works of art like the ram caught in the bush, the gold and lapis-lazuli head of a bull, and the wig-helmet of Meskalamdug, suggest a climax rather than a beginning. Though the royal graves are very much older than was previously thought, they only represent a very late stage in the development of a civilization. There was consequently no doubt that despite their antiquity, they were the result of hundreds and perhaps thousands of years of experience, for such elaborate and accomplished art presupposes long experiment which only the passage of time can crown with success.

Whilst excavating the royal tombs, Woolley established that they were not resting on virgin soil. Beneath them there were layers of debris whose thickness could not yet be determined, but which were proof enough that the site had been occupied earlier. He accordingly dug pits in them, finding bricks and fragments of pottery mingled with the earth. The clearing operation eventually revealed a thickness of clay in which all signs of human occupation came to an end. This layer of clay, at Ur, Kish and Uruk, provided evidence

of the floods which imagination subsequently transformed into a universal cataclysm. And they were certainly very extensive, for the layer of clay was three metres thick.

But when all is said and done, a diluvial deposit is still not virgin soil, and as long as it has not been reached it is not unreasonable to expect further astonishing discoveries. Woolley continued digging through the clay until he reached it. In some countries virgin soil can give surprises; in America, for example, where rock deposits were thought to be virgin soil, they were found to be outflows of volcanic lava beneath which there were further traces of human occupation prior to the eruption. In Mesopotamia, however, a similar surprise was neither to be feared nor hoped for. The objects recovered from the stratum between the virgin soil and the layer of diluvial clay were already surprising enough for an archaeologist. It contained, in fact, the remains of a primitive civilization with pottery corresponding exactly with work which Woolley had found in a tell about four miles west of Ur. Dr. Hall had partially cleared this tell, and some very remarkable discoveries had been made in it—among them the temple of Nin-Khursag with its extraordinary copper bas-reliefs which was built, as a foundation tablet indicated, by A-anni-padda, son of Mes-anni-padda. But it also contained evidence of much earlier occupation, with the remains of reed and mud huts, flint tools and pottery fragments. This was Tell Al Ubaid or El Obeid.

The discovery at Ur of pottery exactly like that of El Obeid, in a deposit earlier than the flood, confirmed that the site had been occupied by a very ancient civilization which had achieved a certain level of development. It was met with once again in the excavations of Uruk and Aparchiyah, and it was soon possible to determine the characteristics of the El Obeid civilization—the oldest found so far on the sites of Mesopotamia, an eneolithic or chalcolithic civilization, apparently related to that of Elam and representing the very beginning of civilization in the Tigris-Euphrates delta. But unlike what was found at Ur, there was no evidence of a diluvial deposit at El Obeid, as though the town had never been touched by the flood. Whilst the Sumerians of the dynastic period had been hitherto accepted as the first inhabitants of the country, it now had to be conceded that others had been there before them—and who could say how many centuries earlier—a mysterious people who not only occupied El Obeid itself but all the sites where the remains of this civilization occurred—the first of the predynastic civilizations.

Where architecture was concerned it was still rudimentary. There were no building remains other than those of earth huts reinforced with reeds, the impression of which was marked in the mud. They



were of course quite primitive but nevertheless able to provide certain architectural effects; the bundles of reeds were actually connected at the top, forming arches and vaults, and the spaces between their columns were filled by matting—again made of reeds—to which earth was applied to form walls. To prevent these dwellings from sinking into the ground (which was still unstable in a region where the marshland was barely drained) they were erected on reed platforms. This arrangement was quite adaptable to decorative effects, and if what Andrae tells us is true, the people of El Obeid knew how to take advantage of them. In the traditional arrangement of recesses and salients, which occurs in all Mesopotamian architecture including that of the Assyrians, he sees an extension of the reed-building method used by the first inhabitants of the country.

These were both hunting and farming people. Their flint tools served both as weapons and sickles, similar to the ones found in the predynastic civilizations of Egypt; they were made with flint teeth mounted in a wooden jaw-shaped handle, and the same technique was used by the Natufians of Palestine. No examples of writing have come down, but the seal was already in use, and copper implements are found side by side with others made of stone, flint, crystal and obsidian. Their pottery was quite beautiful; the vases were well shaped and decorated with black painted designs on a bright background. Some of the goblets or big-bellied pitchers with jutting lips have engraved designs, but painted decorations are predominant and one of the essential features of El Obeid pottery.

Even the pottery material indicates the craftsman's significant progress in technique. The clay is fine, well mixed with straw and carefully fired. The colouring is usually light green and pinkish white. Potters already knew the wheel or else were extraordinarily steady-handed, for their vases are slim and regular as though they had been turned. Vessels were also carved from soft stone, and it seems that here, just as at Badari, the potter sometimes copied stone vases. The overall effect of the decoration is nevertheless more reminiscent of the art of the basket-worker, but the themes do not have the sharp severity of strictly geometrical design. In the same way that the execution is freer, the interpretation of themes allows greater scope to the imagination. One sometimes wonders whether some of the supposedly geometrical forms are not conventionalized animal figures—which are to be found in Elamite pottery. Once again this raises the insoluble problem of whether representational preceded geometrical design or whether, on the contrary, the latter was merely an abstract development in the reproduction of living forms.

Were the representatives of the El Obeid civilization aboriginals? No one can say. The scholars who maintain the greater antiquity of the Elamite civilization assume that they came from Persia, and that they occupied Mesopotamian territories as soon as they were sufficiently drained to be habitable. They, in any event, were the ancestors of the Sumerian civilization and they already bore its characteristics. The use of clay nails, an essential for consolidating mud walls, was to become purely ornamental in subsequent periods when the need no longer remained. The invention of the door, made of matting among the El Obeidians, and later of stone turning in a stone socket, had already been accomplished and was to continue for thousands of years.

At about the same time that Woolley discovered the civilization of El Obeid, Dr. Julius Jordan, working on the site of Warka, where ancient Erech or Uruk was located, noticed in a layer above that of the greenish pottery of the El Obeid period, a new reddish type of pottery, which was totally different. It showed that later than the civilization of El Obeid, but still earlier than the advent of the historical dynasties, a civilization had existed with features of its own, possibly the achievement of another race. The differences it showed were so radical that we can accept, with Frankfort, that they were introduced by a wave of new invaders rather than by a process of evolution. The newcomers were probably Sumerians like the El Obeidians, but they brought a new culture of which further examples were to be found at El Obeid itself, at Tell Asmar and at Khafaje; it betokens such a great advance that we can accept it as evidence of the inroads of a conquering tribe, very different in its arts and skills from the original inhabitants of the area. This is referred to as the Uruk civilization after the place where the finest and most significant specimens are to be found; it is the second pre-dynastic culture which we encounter when making the ascent from the virgin soil. Contrasting with the El Obeid period, in which there was only earth and reed building until bricks were perhaps first hesitantly introduced, the civilization of Uruk is to be distinguished by the very impressive quality of its architecture. The bricks were wide, flat and rectangular. They now made it possible to construct temples in which, as with the White Temple, the last platform of the ziggurat is equipped with a door through which the god, coming down from heaven, could make his entry into the sanctuary.

For some writers, the ziggurat is proof that the first inhabitants of Mesopotamia, or those of the Uruk period at least, came from a country where it was customary to worship on high places. When they found none in a plainland region, they were compelled to make up for them with artificial heights which later became the tiered temples

of Babylonia and Assyria; their prototype is popularly preserved in the tradition of the tower of Babel.

"This mountain, the prototype of the ziggurat that was attached to the chief sanctuaries of Babylonia and even Assyria throughout historical times, was already twelve metres high. It was composed of mere lumps of clay piled up in layers with strata of bitumen interlaced between them. Its steeply battered sides are strengthened and decorated externally by pottery beakers stuck in rows into the mud while it was still soft. Functionally the beakers are the direct descendants of the baked clay cones and nails of the al' Ubaid period which co-existed with them. The faces of the mount are already relieved by the projecting buttresses and recessed niches that adorn all later Mesopotamian walls, but that goes back in principle to the reed huts of al' Ubaid. And the corners of the mound are orientated to the points of the compass according to the rule that subsequently governed the orientation of all sacred buildings in Babylonia."<sup>1</sup>

This temple, which is called the White Temple because the bricks are whitened, was later merged in another building referred to as the Limestone Temple because its walls rest on stone foundations. This one in turn almost disappeared in the Red Temple which followed it. To measure the progress in modern excavational techniques and archaeology, one needs to imagine how these three successive buildings were differentiated, each one merged in the other, their ruins and debris in such confusion that a layman cannot conceive the difficulty of the task they presented. Between the white and limestone temples, it is possible, as Jordan has suggested, that a further invasion brought a people accustomed to building in stone and perhaps racially different from their predecessors. For this reason the building is sometimes referred to as the Exotic Temple.

Whilst the White Temple was a building of quite modest proportions, barely measuring more than 22 metres by 17, the Red Temple consists of a number of huge structures, in which the decorations and architecture are among the most sublime achievements of Mesopotamian art. The walls were faced with a splendid white, red and black mosaic, made from polychrome clay cones which were driven into the soft earth of the wall. Earth bas-reliefs, similar to the ones found in the temple of A-anni-padda at El Obeid, adorned the plinths, and in the scenes of country life—probably religious allegories—animalist art has seldom been given such noble and vivid expression. The full effect of the decorations (fragments of them can be seen at the Baghdad museum) must have been extremely imposing, especially when the colonnade stood intact, with its porticoes of brick columns, eight feet wide, and also dressed

<sup>1</sup> *New Light on the Most Ancient East.*



Fig. 15 *The bird Imgi with its prey, Tell-Obeid*

with a polychrome mosaic in which clay nails were modelled on the scales of palm trees.

This nail mosaic is one of the characteristic features of Sumerian art. It derived, as often happens, from what was formerly a functional necessity. When it had ceased to be important in this way, it was still retained as an ornamental theme. These nails, as we said, served during the reed hut period as a reinforcement for the mud walls. Though they had no practical purpose in brick buildings, they were still retained for their decorative value, which enabled them to survive their usefulness. They were painted at their flat end then dried and driven into the fresh coating which covered the brick walls. Professor E. Heinrich's reconstruction of the Red Temple, which is reproduced in Mr. Seton Lloyd's book,<sup>1</sup> gives an excellent idea of the magnificent effect which was achieved with decoration of this kind.

Uruk pottery, as we said, is completely different from that of El Obeid. The vessels are of grey clay with a carboniferous coating which came either from burning or from a particular kind of earth, giving it a beautiful black gloss. There is another type in which the clay's grey colour is retained, painstakingly preserved, probably by very careful firing, and the fineness of its shades contrasts with the polychrome pottery of El Obeid. Finally, there is a third type with a red hue obtained by firing in an atmosphere impregnated with iron oxides. All of this is very new and suggests technical progress unknown to the civilization of El Obeid and possibly due to the advent of another race. As we proceed through the various layers of the exploratory shafts dug at Uruk (unfortunately we cannot go into the details of this operation, which would be too technical and

<sup>1</sup> *Mesopotamia*, Plate V.

wearisome for the non-specialist reader) we find, in the lower strata first of all, potsherds of the El Obeid type, then Uruk fragments—to the complete exclusion of earlier pottery—then once more some of the old type of polychrome pottery mingled with Uruk monochromes. This would seem to prove that one type was not abruptly substituted for another, but on the contrary, followed it alternately in and out of favour.

The temples of Uruk have yielded an abundance of the seals which have become one of the characteristic elements of Sumerian civilization. All the museums in Europe have fine collections of them and they have been methodically studied, classified and listed. The impression they could make on objects was pre-eminently a mark of ownership, but the signs covering them—which were also magical—served to place this ownership under the protection of gods and demons. This explains the remarkable exuberance of their designs and the immensely important place they take in the history of custom and religion. Originally they consisted of fragments of reed stalk on which the signs were cut. These could be reproduced by rolling the reed in soft clay. The cylindrical form was still to be retained later on when seals were made of stone, and was to endure, with variations, throughout their history.

Some valuable statues have also been discovered on the site of Uruk. Some of them are infused with an extraordinary, almost exciting quality of liveliness—like the figures of the goddess-mother and her child, which have something very modern about them—whilst others seem solemn and hieratical. But there is another discovery, extremely important for the information it yields, which should not go unmentioned—the tablets, covered with pictographic signs, on which the priests of the temple kept their accounts. The characters are pictographs—they give a simplified, outlined and stylized image of the object for which they stand. This was the first stage in writing; it was to be succeeded by the ideograph and finally the abstract symbol, the phonetic value leading to the alphabet. In the accounts of the priests of Uruk, it is to be observed that two forms of calculation are used at the same time: the first, of Sumerian origin, is the sexagesimal system, the second, of Elamite origin, is decimal, like the one we use today.

Funeral rites are an indication of changes in civilization, for generally they imply that new ideas and customs have been introduced, possibly with the advent of alien races. For this reason it is not unprofitable, in order to stress the contrast we have already shown between the civilizations of El Obeid and Uruk, to examine the way in which bodies were placed in their graves. The information to be gleaned in this way is much more important than might nor-

mally be supposed. It is not simply a matter of whether the dead were buried or cremated, but the form which the burial itself took—whether it was in a pit or near the surface, in an urn or a coffin, on matting or against the bare earth, in a basket or beneath a pile of stones, whether the body was left intact or stripped of flesh beforehand. Through this we can recognize profound change, not merely in customs, but in the metaphysics of a people, in their conception of the beyond and after-life, in their beliefs on immortality, the soul, and so on. The position of the body, whether it faces one of the points of the compass, whether it lies on its back or side, crouching, bent, or curled up, these are the elements which an archaeologist first considers when a tomb is uncovered, for the conclusions to be drawn from them may be immensely important. As proof of the distinction between El Obeid—the El Obeid period, that is—and the period of Uruk, it is worth noting that in the first the bodies were stretched out (at Ur they were crouching or curled up), whilst the Urukians used a really remarkable method of cremation. They placed the corpses in clay boxes and cooked them in the closed pots they formed.

At the same time that Woolley and Jordan were respectively discovering the first two predynastic civilizations, Dr. Mackay, engaged in excavating Tell Inghara, found, at Jemdet Nasr, a type of pottery which was completely different from those of El Obeid or Uruk. Two years later in 1928, Professor Langdon undertook a methodical investigation of the tell, which, after the destruction of the ancient city towards the middle of the fourth millennium, was not occupied again. This was not the only place where the pottery of Jemdet Nasr was to be found; it also occurred at certain moments in the history of Ur, Uruk, Kish, Tell Asmar, Khafaje and Arpachiya, thereby proving the existence of a culture which had extended over Mesopotamia during a period of civilization as important, in its own way, as the civilizations of El Obeid and Uruk. For some cities, such as Kish, it is during this period, indeed, that civilization begins. At Kish, for example, after the remains left by the earliest inhabitants of microlithic times, there is no trace of human occupation until the advent of the Jemdet Nasr culture, which probably arrived with an alien race, thought to have been the Accadians.

The term "microlithic" is used of a period in the Stone Age, placed by some in palaeolithic and by others in neolithic times, which is distinguished by the smallness of flint implements. Microliths are found almost everywhere, in Europe, India, South Africa, Egypt and Mesopotamia. Some scholars have contended that the men who used these small tools were pygmies; there is no evidence to support this view, and the opposite seems firmly established by

normal sized skeletons which were found together with the micro-liths. If only through curiosity, nevertheless, it is worthwhile to read the observations made by Menghin on this subject in his *Weltgeschichte der Steinzeit*.

The pottery of Jemdet Nasr shows both beauty of form and design. This level of civilization must have been very advanced if we are to judge it by its writing and ceramics. The latter began to adopt animal themes, sometimes alone, sometimes with geometrical themes. But even where geometrical designs appear alone, they are very much freer than those of the El Obeid period, full of imagination, and quite captivating in the wealth of their decorative invention. The idea of isolating the motif in a kind of frame—referred to as the “metope process”—is already in evidence. The painter sought inspiration in textiles; rather than imitating them, he used an unobtrusive polychrome technique, sometimes applying it directly to the natural colour of the base, sometimes on a white coating which made it stand out more prominently. Bricks were air-dried, narrow and flat. Writing, perhaps, was already becoming phonetic and syllabic. On cylinder-seals there are curiously conventionalized animals. Sculpture progressed considerably, and the figures engraved on a stone vessel, found at Uruk but belonging to the Jemdet Nasr period, are reminiscent of the tablets of the Egyptian predynastic era. Furthermore, as certain details in the shapes of vessels have proved, it is not impossible that intercourse between predynastic Egypt and the Mesopotamia of the Jemdet Nasr period was already conducive to forming aesthetic influences. On the other hand, there is an obvious relationship to be observed between the pottery of Jemdet Nasr and that of the Indus.

With Jemdet Nasr we reach the end of the predynastic or pre-historic period. Mesopotamia was now in possession of a very powerful and highly developed culture which extended as far as the Indus, and Baluchistan, and may even have affected the progress of Egypt. The use of metal had become very common, as the excavation of Farah in particular has shown, though flint implements were still not dispensed with. Gordon Childe summarized the work of these periods when he said: “By the end of the Jemdet Nasr period, the conditions for civilized life in Babylon have already been created. The marsh village has grown into a city raised beyond the reach of any normal flood and unified by a cult and system of government. The al’ Ubaid peasants have been provided with wheeled vehicles to transport their produce and have even learned the art of glazing; architecture has been perfected, the cylinder invented for the sealing of personal property, a system of ciphering and writing devised. The latter inventions were certainly made on the spot; for we have

followed the stages of the process. A people with the genius to invent a script could surely also have invented the wheel. Except perhaps in North Syria, we can find no wheeled vehicle nor wheel-turned pot elsewhere demonstrably older than the Uruk period. But even if this or any other device had been imported into Sumer, it had by now been thoroughly adapted and assimilated to the native culture. But therewith the originative work of Sumer has really been completed; only the stabilization of commerce, ensuring adequate supplies of raw material is needed for Sumerian industry to blossom forth in luxuriant production. That fulfilment comes in the early dynastic period."<sup>1</sup>

These predynastic periods, immensely important since they determined the course of Mesopotamia's history, were still unknown thirty years ago; it is only during that time that their characteristics have been clearly defined and the value of their contribution appreciated. We have seen that those who lived during the Jemdet Nasr civilization were possibly Accadians, and this would explain the curious nature of the foreign elements they introduced into the civilization of the aboriginals, or at least, of the first inhabitants.

The history of the Accadians is closely bound up with that of the Sumerians, but we must not conclude from that that they belonged to the same race. The Accadians were Semites and this fact is imprinted throughout their art and civilization. As their power extended over Mesopotamia, architecture and decoration changed immediately, for theirs was a vigorous nature and they left their mark on all the peoples they brought into subjection. Their country was situated in northern Mesopotamia, south of Assyria, but their authority did not remain restricted to this area. Whilst the Sumerians held sway over the whole of Mesopotamia up to about the middle of the third millennium, Accadian supremacy began from that time and reached its zenith with the great Sargon, who should not be confused with Sargon of Assyria. The former reigned around 2500 B.C., whilst Sargon of Assyria did not come to the throne till nearly two thousand years later.

There can be nothing more romantic than Sargon's history. According to legend he was the son of a harlot, perhaps one of the priestess-courtesans who made their sacrifice in the temples of Ishtar both to the pleasure and the piety of travellers. Abandoned at birth and taken by a peasant, he finally came to Kish where he was accepted in the household of King Ur-Ilbaba. He gained such great influence with the king that, having made himself indispensable, he succeeded in removing his master and replacing him. Some, historians claim a different origin for him and one no less romantic;

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*



according to them he was the secret son of the Queen of Kish, Ku-Bau, to whom he succeeded.

Whatever his beginnings may have been, as soon as Sargon came to power he laid the foundations of the great empire which was to encompass the Sumerians, the Assyrians, the Subarians and the Gutians, making him master of all the land between the Persian Gulf and the Taurus mountains in one direction, and from Arabia to Persia in the other. His conquests were consolidated by those who succeeded him. The warlike spirit of the Accadians is very much in evidence in the stele that Naram-Sim erected in commemoration of his victories. An extraordinarily driving will for power impelled every step the Accadians took. They were warriors rather than bearers of civilization, but it is important none the less to recognize their contribution to the art and culture of their time. The period of the Accadians is not only to be distinguished by the new features they introduced wherever they substituted their domination for that of the Sumerians, but by a new form of civilization, clearly recognizable and essentially solemn and cruel.

Their temples were constructed according to new principles. The axial principle, for example, which had prevailed in Sumerian temples, where the entrance was in the axis of the sanctuary, gave way to a curious predilection for the indirect; Accadian temple architecture was more complicated (where design was concerned at all events) and the halls were so arranged that the entrance door was placed in an angle and the sanctuary could only be reached by following a broken line—a very significant feature. The palaces were very different, and this becomes apparent as we pass from the Sumerian to the Accadian layer in sites like Tell Asmar and Khafaje. Cylinder-seals also underwent a change of character.

When Accadian domination yielded to that of the Gutians, mountain warriors who invaded and succeeded in conquering a large part of Mesopotamia, a different civilization was established, one which can best be defined by the discoveries at Tello and the personality of Gudea. But this is a sphere of archaeology which has been known for a considerable time and is well represented in the collections at the Louvre. The dynasty coincides with a kind of Sumerian Renaissance, in which non-Semite elements became dominant once again over the Semite elements which had held sway under the Accadians. Sarzec's excavations at Tello have revealed the Guti-Sumerian culture through a wealth of objects and documents which are precious both to the historian and the student of beauty. Gudea's personality, as it appears in statues, was strong and original. He, more than any of his predecessors—though a new spirit became apparent as far back as the reign of Ur-Bau—

was responsible for this Renaissance in which Sumerian traditions were revived, still partially imbued with Semitic sediments received from the Accadians. The art of Tello-Lagash is not pure Sumerian art, but it represents a kind of return to the past without becoming fettered to those elements in it which would gain mastery over modern men. The many statues of Gudea in the Louvre mark the trend of early Sumerian sculpture—endowed with amazing brilliance and a sharp sense of truth which introduced a form of vigorous naturalism, though yielding none of its monumental and hieratic nobility.

Up to about 1940, it was thought that the civilizations of El Obeid, Uruk and Jemdet Nasr were the oldest and that it was not possible to go any further, but whatever disorder archaeology suffered through the Second World War and the international political crises it entailed, discoveries were not completely interrupted. Other ancient civilizations were brought to light, first in the "Assyrian" region with the site of Hassuna, then with the excavation of Qalaat Jarmo and the examination of the caves of Suleimaniya. "From then on," writes M. André Parrot, "there was no doubt that we had reached the final phase of the neolithic age, but at the same time, renewed work on a site in the extreme south, Eridu, produced unexpected evidence which compelled us once again to reconsider what we knew of the civilization and peopling of the lower region. The problem of relationships between the north and the south has certainly never been set for us so clearly before, and if we do not find a satisfactory solution this time, the mystery will always remain. For rarely has an ancient civilization re-emerged so vividly."

Thanks to the discoveries made since 1940, that is how the various stages of Mesopotamian archaeology appear to us today. We are left to wonder whether the political situation in the Middle East is likely to help scholars in their work, and whether now and in the coming years we shall see discoveries increase as abundantly and as diversely as they have so far.

The caves of Suleimaniya, which were explored by Iraq's Department of Antiquities under the direction of M. Sayid Ahmed, confirmed in 1949 what was already known concerning the existence of a palaeolithic civilization of aurignacian and mousterian type, remains of which had already been found in the Syrian desert between Damascus and Ramadi, near the well of Rutba and in the area of Kerkuk. These stone implements belonged to the earliest inhabitants of Mesopotamia. At roughly the same time, an American expedition, led by Mr. Braidwood, found in north-east Iraq at Tell Mattarah and Qalaat Jarmo, evidence in five different levels



Fig. 16 Map of the archae



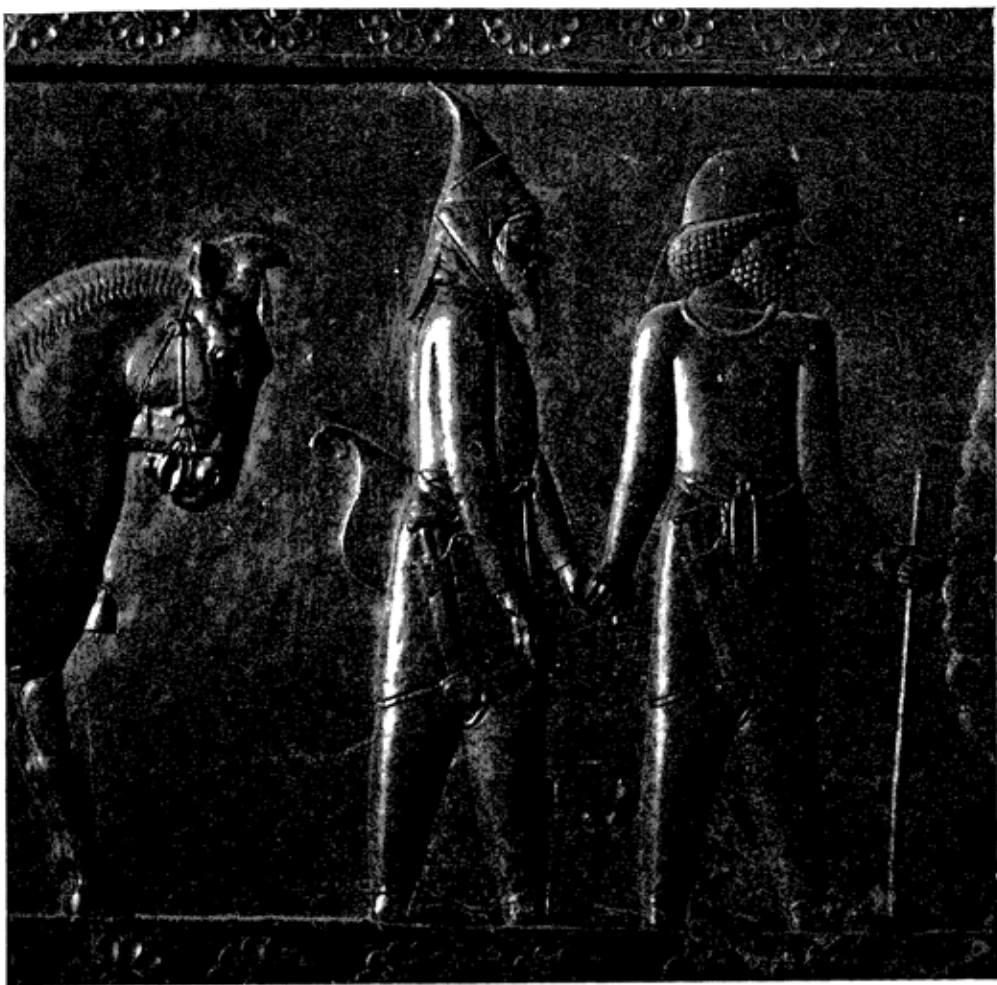
*ological sites in the Near East*

of a people who used polished stone tools, and skilfully modelled statuettes of animals and of the goddess of fertility, but apparently had no knowledge of ceramics. In 1948 the excavations of Qara Yatagh near Mattarah proved the existence of five levels of occupation, each broadly representing a stage in the evolution of the civilization, which in this case led up to the use of pottery. Many more prehistoric sites have been found since then; they are at Zarzi, at Palegawra, Karim Shanir and Barda Balka, which clearly show how the different stone ages followed one another in Mesopotamia.

Since the sensational discoveries of Ur, Uruk and El Obeid, however, there was no find as important as Tell Hassuna in 1942. This was the result of work by M. Said Fuad Safar, and it was only four years later that Europe learnt of it. This meant that the amazingly prolific site and its sixteen levels of civilization, commencing from virgin soil with polished stone tools, became known at the same time. "No Mesopotamian site had ever yielded a comparable sequence," writes André Parrot. In the prehistoric period there were no built-up dwellings; the inhabitants lived in tents and were probably nomads. At levels III and IV there are the remains of pisé houses; they are quite complicated in layout and carefully built. The people became sedentary and took to farming. They made flint sickles to harvest their crops, terra-cotta spindle-whorls for spinning the wool of their sheep, and most important of all, they invented a form of pottery which they decorated with abstract designs like zigzags, chevrons, palms and fishbones, up to layers IV-VI, where their artistic and technical progress enabled them to produce jars in which the spouts were shaped like human heads. At the same time, on this brown, red and black painted pottery, the more or less stylized shapes of animals made their appearance.

What were the racial origins of the "people of Hassuna"—there is no other way of referring to them—who were producing such delicate and beautiful pottery as early as the fifth millennium? It is very difficult to say. From bones found in tombs where jars were sometimes used as coffins, the Hassunians appear to have belonged to a dolicocephalic Mediterranean tribe, with brown skin and hair, long noses and narrow heads; nothing more than this is known about them.

Samarra is on the banks of the Tigris, north of Baghdad. It has been known since Herzfeld's excavations, which go back about forty years, but it is to recent excavations there that we owe the fine painted pottery which, unlike that of Hassuna, is not abstract but representational, and depicts an astonishing variety of subject matter. Like Elamite pottery, it shows domestic animals—ibex, stilt-birds and fishes—with their features often so accentuated that



Scythian tributary, Persepolis, eastern staircase of the Apadana



Fight between a lion and a bull, bas-relief at Persepolis

they become almost stylized. There are dancing-girls, hand in hand, performing the religious round which is to be found all the way along the Mediterranean and survives in modern times as the *kolo*; elsewhere there are figures with long flowing hair who seem to lament inconsolably round a corpse.

Men and animals make their appearance once more on the prehistoric pottery of Tell Halaf<sup>1</sup> with even greater exuberance and imagination than at Samarra—birds in full flight and human shapes, possibly the incarnations of the gods. These potters knew the use of metal, in the higher layers at all events, but the dampness of the soil made it impossible for their copper implements to be preserved. This change in the equipment of the artisan, the hunter and the warrior had stupendous consequences, for as André Parrot rightly says, progress always entails basic structural alterations. It is certainly a stirring thought to envisage each of the "strata of civilization", superimposed on one another in the tells, as great moments in the history of mankind. From the stone tool to the metal one, from crude pottery to superbly decorated ceramics, from the exposed resting place to the skill and splendour with which palaces were built, there is abundant evidence of the progress which was achieved here, though possibly with the help of alien peoples, who made their peaceful or warlike entry bringing their own cultures with them.

We have mentioned the sixteen levels of civilization at Has-suna; there are eighteen at Eridu, where almost all the cultures of Mesopotamia are represented. It was only in the course of excavations from 1946 to 1949 that the existence of cultures earlier than the Obeid type was established. So strict was the continuity at Eridu that, in the area of the ziggurat, eighteen sanctuaries were found superimposed on one another, each corresponding with a different stage of civilization. This enables us to appreciate how life can go on in a given area, still undergoing change—how, despite floods, wars and other disasters, man can cling to the place where he first settled and entered what we call civilization, however humbly it may be represented by his flint tools. Glyn E. Daniel<sup>2</sup> quotes Seton Lloyd as saying that Eridu may have been the first city ever to come into existence, and this seems borne out by the ancient Babylonian legend of the creation: "Before, all lands were beneath the water; then Eridu was made." Connected in this way with the tradition of the flood, Eridu had already come into being in the fourth millennium B.C. The Necropolis, which Sayid Fuad Safar began exploring in 1946, has yielded an

<sup>1</sup> Max Feiherr von Oppenheim, *Tell Halaf, Die Præhistorischen Funden*, Berlin, 1943.

<sup>2</sup> *A Hundred Years of Archaeology*, Duckworth, London, 1950.



abundance of funerary deposits. It is described by André Parrot as "The most remarkable necropolis ever found in Iraq, with the exception of Ur." In it there were about a thousand graves with the dead at rest in brick coffins, either stretched out or crouching, according to the period. They were surrounded by the statuettes of gods and spirits who guarded them in their everlasting sleep; they had kept their gold and shell jewellery and their fard tablets, and superb vases were there in profusion, reflecting all the successive styles of Mesopotamia, from the very earliest of El Obeid with its black or brown geometrical design.

In one of these graves, which belongs to the museum of Baghdad, the dead man had gone to the other world taking his favourite dog with him, a finely shaped greyhound, who was lying between his legs. Another showed a taste for grotesque statuettes with human bodies and lizard heads. Yet another, probably a seaman, kept by him a model of the ship in which he had sailed, with its oars and its mast. But it is the architecture of the eighteen superimposed temples, with their altars and offering tables, which best expresses the continuous occupation of Eridu, and the progress which men accomplished during the thousands of years they lived there, worshipping their gods and burying their dead.

Assyria is situated right to the north of what can still be called Mesopotamia, though the course of the Euphrates now forks towards Syria; Assyrian civilization was really focused round the Upper Tigris in an area which is geographically very different from Mesopotamia proper. The nearby mountains gave it another, colder climate. Irrigated by many rivers which make their way down from the heights, the land demanded none of the complicated canal system necessary in the south. And with wood from the forests and stone from the quarries, there was no need to depend on bricks. These circumstances provided the conditions for a different civilization—one which has been studied for a long time now, for it was in Assyria that the first Mesopotamian excavations began, and the name of Nineveh was always one of those exerting the greatest power on the scholar's enthusiasm and the layman's imagination.

In their *A Century of Exploration at Nineveh*,<sup>1</sup> R. Campbell Thompson and R. W. Hutchinson recall the historical record of excavations on the famous site of Kuyunjik. Despite the notable discoveries which have been made in these immense ruins, it has been calculated that there are still 14,500,000 tons of earth to clear at Kuyunjik itself and 6,500,000 tons at Nabi-Yunis—enough to keep a thousand workmen employed for the greater part of another century.

<sup>1</sup> London, 1929.

That is why the palaces of Sennacherib and Ashur-Bani-Pal, as well as the temples of Kidmuri and Ishtar, have not yet been fully cleared. In their recent expeditions, Thompson and Hutchinson have marked the position of important monuments which are still waiting for the shovel and conveyor. The 1931 expedition yielded an inscription which was historically very valuable for it refers to the campaign led by Ashur-Bani-Pal at the head of 50,000 men into the land of Mehri to bring back the wood needed for reconstructing the Temple of Ishtar. It also uncovered seven tombs of air-dried bricks in which there were curious vaults, pottery, and so on. The most important historical document, for it fixes an essential date in Assyrian chronology, is the cylinder discovered in the Temple of Nabu, which tells of Ashur-Bani-Pal's struggle against his brothers to avenge the death of his father Sennacherib, who was murdered by them whilst praying in the Temple of Nisroch.

We know that Sennacherib was a great builder, but it was only recently that one of the most important public works of his reign was discovered—the canal built to provide Nineveh with drinking-water. This canal (what we know of it is due to the efforts of Henry Frankfort) was a colossal undertaking. Sixty feet wide, paved with stones, and contained by stone walls nine feet wide, it began in the rocks of Gomel, thirty miles from Mosul, with a monumental façade, sculptured with the effigy of the king, and wound through the rock of the mountain massif, spanning the valleys with aqueducts, whose ruins represent one of the most splendid achievements of ancient times. The main reason for building it was the regular irrigation of the fields round Nineveh, whose fertility until then had been very contingent on rainfall. Fertility was the justification for building this extraordinary canal, thirty miles long and so well constructed that its ruins are still one of the masterpieces of ancient skill. The aqueduct alone was 990 feet long and seventy-five feet wide.

But for all that, it should not be imagined that there were thousands of slaves labouring naked in a beating sun and dying under the whips of their task-masters. Sennacherib wanted his labourers to be treated well, and in dedicating the canal to tutelary deities on the bas-relief of Gomel, he shows that he was generous to them. The inscription says, "The men who dug the canal were dressed by me with linen and brightly coloured woollen raiments. I gave them golden rings and golden daggers." His generosity seems very remarkable, not merely because little store was set by human life in ancient times, but when we reflect that building the huge canal must have been immensely costly. . . . However rich the treasure of Nineveh may have been, however great the generosity of Sennacherib, it is hard to imagine the king of Assyria dressing his slaves

in splendid clothes and lavishing jewels on the thousands of poor wretches who hollowed out the rock and carried the stones which were needed to build the colossal aqueducts.

Until modern times these ruins were a perpetual source of legend. According to Dr. Frankfort, the present-day inhabitants of Gerwan, who are Yezidis, worshippers of the devil, have a story about the aqueduct which tells how a king promised his daughter's hand to the man who could water the area round his capital. One of the suitors accordingly started work on an aqueduct, and it had almost been finished when a clever but unscrupulous rival had the idea of spreading shining canvas on the ground to sparkle in the sun like sheets of water. Fooled by the trick, the unfortunate architect thought that he had been beaten, decided that it was pointless to go on with his work since water was already there, and as much from the gall of wasted effort as his disappointed love, he died of a broken heart.

Nineveh over a hundred years ago was the scene of an extraordinary dispute between rival archaeologists; the Frenchman Botta, who began the excavations, and the Englishman Layard who wanted to take a hand in them as well. Two work parties consequently began work on the ruins at opposite ends, and the ruins were fortunately so large that they were prevented from meeting and aggravating the quarrel. This happened again later on when Place and Rassam both wanted to clear the palace of Ashur-Bani-Pal. Whilst the French party was resting, the Englishmen went on with their work during the night, and it was in the course of the third night of their excavations that they uncovered the magnificent bas-reliefs which are now the British Museum's most splendid possessions.

If archaeologists of different nationalities still compete with one another, it is usually without this element of antagonism, and they settle their differences quite calmly for the sake of science and their common interest in archaeology. Nineveh, in any case, has still not yielded everything. Ninety-one years after Botta's first excavations, Mr. Campbell Thompson, in 1932, dug a shaft under the Temple of Ishtar, which belongs to the Assyrian period, and only reached virgin soil after penetrating through thirty metres of debris. It is not difficult to imagine the huge length of time and the many different occupations this accumulation represented. Every period of Mesopotamian culture had left its mark there: the painted pottery of El Obeid, the grey pottery of Uruk, the seals of Jemdet Nasr, and the vases decorated with animal forms from the earliest dynasties. The country's entire history for perhaps fully five thousand years was reflected in this shaft, proving the great antiquity of the settlements on the site, and summarizing in the uninterrupted sequence

of its layers the whole evolution of a civilization through invasion, wars and floods. It is a curious fact that the lowest layers, which rise up to the ruins of the Temple of Manishtusu (dating probably from about 2450 B.C.) only occupy about a quarter of the depth of the shaft.

The Accadian layer, which includes the ruins of a temple, was especially rich in works of art. Amongst them, Mr. Campbell Thompson found the splendid bronze head of a man, with the characteristic head-dress of the period, his plaited hair interwoven with ribbons and a kind of bun at the nape of the neck. Its workmanship and the noble, lifelike quality of the face place it among the masterpieces of the Sargonid period. Historical detail is provided by a cylinder bearing the name of a daughter of King Sargon; she was a priestess in the Temple of Nannar, the Moon-Goddess, at Ur, a fact which proves that after conquering the town, Sargon was not above offering one of his children in the service of the guardian deity.

From 1927 up to the present day, some very important excavations have been carried out at Tepe Gawra, a large tell situated in the plainland, not far from ancient Dur-Sargon (today known as Khorsabad), fifteen miles north-east of Nineveh. An eminence about 22 metres tall, its height makes it stand out very clearly against the surrounding country. Professor E. A. Speiser identified the site during a research expedition which he conducted in the area on behalf of Dropsie College of Philadelphia. He opened a trench on the eastern slope of the tell, and this vertical incision made it possible for him to establish that it contained many layers full of remains. Mr. Charles Bache followed him and undertook the complete clearance of the tell by removing its layers horizontally. This led through the centuries from the Hurrian ruins at the surface of the mound down to the deepest layers which, as the shape of the bricks and the features of the pottery proved, dated from the period of Jemdet Nasr.

Mr. Speiser writes in his book, *Excavations at Tepe Gawra*,<sup>1</sup> "To the student of ancient times the main appeal of Gawra is due to the fact that we have here a virtually unbroken record which begins far back in the neolithic period and extends to the middle of the second millennium B.C. No other site in Mesopotamia has shed light on so long a series of prehistoric and early historic occupations. Arpachiya was abandoned as early as the Uruk period. Nineveh witnessed the several prehistoric stages, but was quite deserted during the whole of the third millennium. Ashur and Billa were not settled before the end of chalcolithic times, when Gawra and Nineveh had

<sup>1</sup> University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1936.

already participated in more than a millennium of man's gradual emergence into the full light of history. And the value of the Gawra evidence is enhanced by the clear sequence of its completely excavated levels."

Let us summarize this sequence. Of the thirteen layers discovered, the six at the top, which Mr. Speiser includes under the heading *late Gawra*, cover a period of about one thousand five hundred years, from the third millennium to the period of the Hurrians (1700 to 1400). This was when the transition from the copper to the bronze age occurred. The six layers immediately beneath them (*middle Gawra*) belong to a chalcolithic civilization corresponding to the period of Jemdet Nasr and Uruk in Mesopotamian chronology. The thirteenth layer, the oldest, corresponds with the period of El Obeid. The most interesting layers are the eighth and ninth in which there is a new type of "Billa" pottery. The sixth is also important for the virtual revolution which took place in the use of metal. Mr. Speiser rightly sees this as "an eloquent proof of the revolutionary changes introduced through the development of copper as a decisive factor in human history—with ties of trade now binding the most far-flung corners of the civilized world. In this centre of a civilization dating from the beginning of the third millennium, we find evidence of ties not only with Ashur and Sumer but also with Iran and India, Transcaucasia, Anatolia and the Cyclades, Syria and Palestine."

Indeed, among the objects found at Tepe Gawra, there was a cup bearing the relief of a group of sheep—similar in style and treatment to a bowl discovered at Vouni, Cyprus, which was used in snake worship. This similarity seems all the more curious in the light of the fact that the Cypriot vessel dates ten centuries after that of Tepe Gawra.

The Billa pottery found in layers VIII and IX at Tepe Gawra is characterized by its greyish paste and its monochrome decorations with geometrical or naturalist designs. The vessels bordered with birds are particularly outstanding and have a number of affinities with the pottery of Susa II. It was found in a tell situated at Shibaniba, eight miles east of Nineveh. This pottery probably goes back to protodynastic times but the succession of layers and the variations of ceramic technique and decoration promise the most interesting discoveries.

The site of Arpachiyah, still in the region of Nineveh, has only been excavated since 1933 by E. L. Mallowan. Before the El Obeid period it held an important city with temples, comfortable houses, and stone buildings resembling the tombs of Argolis. There are potsherds closely related to the Subarian pottery of Tell Halaf.

If, in Tepe Gawra, Tell Billa and Arpachiyah, we are dealing with new names in archaeological history, the name of Khorsabad on the other hand is one of the most famous. It will be familiar to those who have followed the research of Thomas and Place since the middle of the nineteenth century. But however much was found on the site of Dur Sharrukin at that time, the excavations which really revealed the character of this mushroom city (which has still not yielded all its secrets) were those by Gordon Loud. We know at least that it was on this site, never built upon until then, that Sargon, king of Assyria from 721 to 705 B.C., erected a magnificent capital, intending it to replace Nineveh. We are still ignorant of the reasons for this change of capital. Perhaps Sargon wished to withdraw from the city weighed upon too heavily by the memory of his ancestors; perhaps it was his desire to flee the tyranny of the priesthood which had grown too powerful. It seems, at all events, that Dur Sharrukin, born of a royal whim like Tell El Amarna, lasted little longer than the City of the Horizon of the Sun's Disk where the great heretic Akhnaton reigned.

The citadel has been cleared, and in it can be seen the Temple of Nabu and a number of houses belonging to dignitaries; aerial photography has made it possible to appreciate their great size. The most beautiful private building is undoubtedly the home of the Grand Vizier, Sinahusur, with sculptured alabaster paving on which an inscription identified the ruins. Revealing comfort which we customarily term *modern*, these magnificently decorated houses contained large mural paintings; one in particular was thirty metres long, and its style and lively colouring are reminiscent of the art of Nineveh. The statues uncovered in the ruins of Khorsabad were also in the Assyrian tradition.

Unlike Akhnaton, it seems that Sargon did not create a fresh style to decorate his new city. He remained faithful to ancient custom, and there is no evidence of an aesthetic revolution like that of Tell El Amarna, either in his palace or that of Sennacherib. As at Tell El Amarna, the prosperity of Dur Sharrukin was destined to be shortlived. Despite the magnificent buildings constructed by Sargon and his successor, despite the beauty of the town which rapidly grew round the new Assyrian Versailles, despite all the great work on sanitation, irrigation and embellishment by which the founder of the city had intended to ensure its lasting life, Dur Sharrukin could not challenge the supremacy of ancient Nineveh for long. It was probably too new and had not had sufficient time to spread its roots deep in the virgin soil. The oldest capitals, rich with memories which rise above one another like the geological strata of history, have a power and an authority which mushroom cities

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could never hope to possess. It is a grave error—and many conquerors have committed it—to believe that a city can be arbitrarily created. The lie of the land and its biological character play a greater part in this than the will of men. A city is the outcome of a long process of gestation and evolution. If it appears overnight it will vanish overnight—as though the assent of the elements, the willingness of the land and natural growth, whether for an individual human being or a city, were the necessary conditions for long life.

The parallel between Dur Sharrukin and Akhet-Aton is striking for the way it shows how two similar attempts were made to break with tradition by moving the centre of the state from the ancient capital to an uninhabited site where a new city was to replace it. There was failure in both cases, with the difference, nevertheless, that Khorsabad died what we can call a natural death in the order of things, whilst Tell El Amarna was painstakingly and methodically razed. Created at a whim, Khorsabad, the huge and splendid Dur Sharrukin, witnessed the loss of its political supremacy to ancient Nineveh; the magnificent ruins discovered there, the artistic masterpieces accomplished under the two kings as though to establish its lasting survival, could not save it from perishing like the City of the Horizon of the Sun's Disk. Here, as at Tell El Amarna, there were buildings which remained uncompleted. After the murder of Sargon in 705 B.C., his son Sennacherib probably shifted the capital back to Nineveh and all his officials and courtiers followed him. That was why some large sites of the city, which was designed to be very extensive, never had buildings erected on them. The streets were much too large for the traffic they had to take and the fact that Dur Sharrukin did not grow to the extent anticipated is proved by two gates to the city which were never used. One of these gates was never even finished, and it was a great surprise for archaeologists to find it filled up with pebbles, walled up as it were, whilst the chipped stones, and the socketed blocks which were to provide the uprights, the threshold and the lintel, were left in disorder on the ground, as though on a working site where building had been abruptly interrupted.

Akhnaton's capital was condemned to die at the eager hands of destroyers, who, meeting little resistance in the bricks of which it was built, razed it to the ground; but Dur Sharrukin, built of stone and exposed to nothing more than the possible severity of the climate, retained its huge walls, its stout columns and its brilliantly coloured frescoes, perpetuating, despite the fleeting life of the city, the glory of its founder, Sargon.

## CHAPTER V

### PERSIA

IRAN AND ELAM played quite different rôles in the development of Persian civilization. Certain geographic, ethnographic, historical and social factors brought their influence to bear, either in the way Persia affected neighbouring peoples with her own civilization, or to the extent that she imbibed cultural elements from them, subsequently assimilating and transforming them.

Iran, a mountainous country and rich in metals, seemed to hold aloof, up to about the third millennium, from the trends of culture and civilization which were manifest in the lower region. Research, at all events, has shown clearly that it lagged behind Elam—already in full flower. Elam (its real name is Haltami) owed the part it played in a dual civilization to its position as a plainland, enjoying relations both with the rich metal-yielding mountain region of Iran and the alluvial lands of Mesopotamia. Even today, there are some who wonder whether it was at the root of all civilization in the interior of Asia. Whether the Sumerians or the Elamites take historical precedence still has to be settled. It may well be that both received civilization from the Indus plain (where even older sites are to be found) or from Baluchistan, where archaeological research began comparatively recently. There is an obvious relationship between Elamite pottery and that found by Pumpelly at Anau in Turkestan; and even at Tripolje in the Ukraine, funeral rites, and vessels found in tombs show more than one remarkable point of similarity with what we know of Elam.

Hence, from the very beginnings of Persian history, we witness a dual trend of aesthetic, cultural and commercial communication, with Mesopotamia on one hand, and with central and southern Asia on the other. With interpenetration of this kind, Persia was inevitably to give as well as to receive. The part played by the Caspians, the pre-Iranian inhabitants of Iran who left magnificent rock sculpture at Saipul, Horan and Kurangun, still remains to be determined.

The bas-reliefs of Saipul, which Herzfeld attributes to the first half of the third millennium, or 2670 to 2550 B.C., represent the triumph of the king of the Lullus, Annubanini, who appears, though vanquished this time, on the famous stele of Naram-Sin the Accadian.



The Saipul inscriptions were drawn up in Accadian, perhaps because Iran had no writing of its own—in this it was very much behind Elam—or because Accadian was the language used for official, diplomatic or ritual purposes.

The king represented on the bas-reliefs of Horan was called Sarbanibirini. As we still know nothing of the chronology of the ancient Iranian dynasty, we cannot say whether he was Anubanini's predecessor or successor. Judging from the style of the sculpture, which is rougher and clumsier than that of Saipul, one is tempted to attribute it to an earlier generation. The ancient bas-reliefs of Naqshi Rostam might have provided the answer to this question if Bahram II, who reigned at the end of the third century A.D., had not perversely taken it into his head to substitute his own likeness for the old sculpture, which has become almost unrecognizable.

The most remarkable and best preserved site is at Kurangun, halfway between Persepolis and Susa, where it was discovered in 1924. It is not a tomb but a kind of sanctuary with a large bas-relief, in front of which there is a platform hollowed out of the rock and only accessible by a narrow stairway coming down from the top of the cliff. The bas-relief of Kurangun is aesthetically of very great importance. Though probably not as ancient as those of Saipul or Horan, since it only dates from about 2400 B.C., it has a power, vigorous yet restrained, which compels our admiration. Worshippers are shown coming down from the top of the cliff, just as the priests and their congregation must have done. The figures are short and thickset, wearing a kind of hanging cap; their rough, austere modelling should by no means be taken as evidence of the artist's lack of skill; this is belied by the fact that the faces are shown in full profile—very remarkable in this period and a noteworthy advance in representational art, still unachieved by the Egyptians or the Sumerians. This restraint, and religious solemnity imbue the file of worshippers with an air of holiness as they make their way down to their gods.

Should this be taken to mean that they had an underground temple? We think not: Iran's was an open-air religion, and it would seem indeed that these cliff sanctuaries, clinging halfway up a sheer rock mass, were themselves the places of worship. Kurangun then, was a typical Caspian temple.

The god sits on a throne formed by a coiled snake. In his left hand he holds a snake, in his right a vessel from which the water of life overflows. He wears a horned helmet on his head. The goddess, sitting behind him, wears a similar one; perhaps she was the goddess Innina, invoked by the Lullu Anubanini on the bas-relief of Saipul.

These bas-reliefs are extremely important because illustrations showing the men of this period are still rare in Iran, and there are almost no examples we can refer to apart from the small bronze statuette in the Moscow Museum—clearly related to the figures at Kurangun; those on the Nehavend vase seem more like the outcome of Sumerian influence than an original expression of the spirit of the Caspian. These remains are to be valued all the more highly because Caspian culture, still so inadequately known, disappears at the beginning of the first millennium B.C., with the invasion of the Aryans, who were to occupy the country and give it its characteristic civilization.

Herzfeld traces the much debated origin of the Aryans to Eranvej, the land of the two rivers, Oxus and Iaxartes.<sup>1</sup> Setting out from Khwarizm and Samarkand to reach Mesopotamia, the Aryans were necessarily compelled to cross Iran, just as an Indo-Aryan people, the Mitanni, had done several centuries earlier, and as the Saka were to do in the second century B.C., urged on by the migration of the nomads from central Asia, and also destined to wander until they founded their Hindu Empire.

But if ancient Iranian civilization is represented by little more than rock bas-reliefs, Elamite culture has come down to us very much more complete, especially since the excavations by Morgan at Susa. Within forty years—Morgan's research began in 1891—the Tell of Susa, when completely cleared, revealed a civilization of such great antiquity that it now seems likely to antedate even the earliest of the Mesopotamian periods. Complemented by the discoveries at Syalk, Nehavend, Damghan and Tepe Moussian, these excavations have revealed pottery of very remarkable quality; it can be studied in the Louvre Museum, where there is a very fine collection.

This pottery came from tombs in a huge burial-ground where two different forms of interment are to be distinguished. Sometimes the bodies were buried intact, either stretched out or curled up; sometimes the skeletons are incomplete, as though the burial only took place after they were stripped of flesh—a very old prehistoric custom—or after they had been exposed. The latter practice is still maintained by the Parsee worshippers of fire, who expose their dead on towers for birds to tear at them; after this, the stripped and dismembered bodies are buried. It is curious to recognize, at the very beginnings of Elamite civilization, a custom which has continued uninterrupted right into modern times.

The funerary vessels placed near the corpse varied considerably in form—bowls, vases, cups, bottles and goblets—but were always

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeological History of Iran*. The Schweich lectures of the British Academy, London, 1935.

decorated with the same designs: variations on animal themes. The paste was light, well fashioned and of refined yellowish clay. Although the Elamite potter did not know the use of the wheel, his work is delicate, even, and with a fine inner surface. He did his modelling by hand or with the reel, a plate which he moved with his hand; though this still did not give the mechanical evenness of the wheel, it imparted a lightness and a freedom to his work which is evident in all specimens of this pottery.

Two periods can be so clearly distinguished in Susian pottery that they are designated *Susa I* and *Susa II*. Between *Susa I* and *Susa II*, it seems that there were violent upheavals; the culture of the country was affected by a complete change of civilization, perhaps through the invasion of an alien people who, though probably without a civilization of their own at first, gradually adapted themselves to the ancient culture and, by bringing it into line with their own ideas and conceptions, assimilated it.

Whilst the various sub-categories of *Susa I* (*Susa Ia*, *Ib*, *Ic*, *Id*) are based only on subtle distinctions, *Susa II* represents a fundamental change. In the first place, the paste of this pottery is no longer yellow but reddish, not so fine and not so well fashioned. It shows less delicacy in its forms, and some, like the large goblet, have almost entirely disappeared. But this transformation is most striking in the decoration of the pottery, as though the old themes were now mechanically repeated, and the deep significance of their symbols forgotten. There was not a progressive transition from *Susa I* to *Susa II* but a break; we still know nothing of its causes or its manifestations, but it remains very clearly recognizable when we study the eloquent testimony which the pottery offers us.

The vessels of the first Susian period were richly and beautifully decorated. With the very simplest means and using only one colour, black (to which variations in the firing process could impart tints of violet or even pink) the potter was able to obtain some wonderful effects. He found his subject matter in animal life: the moufflon, with his great curved horns, the long-haired goat, birds, hare, fishes, and a curious long-necked creature like an ostrich, composed his repertoire. He would sometimes show human figures but examples are few when compared with his work on animals, which, on the other hand, provided an incredible wealth of design. The subject was never given naturalistic portrayal; so far from this, the animal providing the theme is always so distorted that sometimes only long study of the design makes it possible to recognize him. The way in which the long-haired goat becomes a kind of comb, the method of stylization through which the moufflon loses his body and retains only his horns—which now form a circle, the hare so drawn out

that he has become no more than a cipher, and a flock of birds reduced to a group of chevrons, attest an all-absorbing intellectual process which has no like in the art of any other country or period. At the very most, Susian pottery could be compared with certain Peruvian vessels of the Chimu or Nazca periods, but even then, the ways in which they are distorted and simplified make them too remote from each other for us to attempt to establish any relationship between them.

In most cases, an unbiased observer would fail to distinguish any animal forms in the decorations on Elamite vessels. The best way of learning to interpret the stylizations clearly is to begin by deciphering the shapes of ibex, goats and birds on those pieces of pottery where an element of naturalism still remains, and then to follow the process of simplification gradually until the image is reduced to nothing more than a symbol. But there is no proof that this was the sequence with Elamite designs. The debate still continues between those scholars who claim that naturalistic decoration preceded stylization, and those who contend that realism, on the contrary, developed from simplification. Both opinions are valid, and we are not in a position to decide between them on the strength of any rigid principle. Here, in effect, we are dealing with extremely delicate and mysterious psychological processes of whose mechanism we know nothing. Whether representational or allusive art came first remains to be settled conclusively. But it is still nonetheless obvious that to represent objects in themselves and for themselves alone is to corrupt the very nature of art, which, in its essence and origins is magical or religious but never gratuitous. The gratuitous element enters art only when all notion of its gravity and deep power is lost; to put it more simply—where there is a decline corresponding with an essential change in the way the object is understood.

What was the meaning to be conveyed through the animals on Elamite vessels? No one can say, but their value was certainly not purely decorative. The purely decorative does not occur in great aesthetic periods; even when the symbol is apparently whimsically concealed, it will still be recognized by anyone who has the knowledge to interpret it. What we lack in order to extract the essential meaning of the Elamites' designs is an understanding of their myths and their beliefs concerning the beyond. There is no doubt that the animals depicted on their funerary vessels were directly related to their ideas of the afterlife; they probably corresponded with resurrection or fertility rites which were usually connected.

It now becomes possible to account for the simplification. Once it



Fig. 17 'Circle-ibex', vase from Susa

is no longer the image of the object which is important but its meaning, it is enough to represent it by its sign—in other words, during the periods of pictographs, by an *abstract design* of its shape. Naturalistic representation is in opposition to the very concept of the holy; the Jews' condemnation of images and the Moslem precept by which living forms are so distorted that they become unrecognizable, are in keeping with the same idea. When the decorative instinct of the artist comes into play at this point, the realist representation of an object is replaced by ornamental stylization. The symbol was sufficient to provide the nucleus for a decorative theme; the painter developed amazing virtuosity in the unending variety he brought to the combinations—sometimes logical and sometimes as fortuitous as the patterns of a kaleidoscope—which he formed from the images dictated by religious or magical beliefs.

It was in the way he used the abstract diagram that the Susian potter revealed his decorative genius. The circle-ibex, the chevron-bird, and the zigzag-hare stimulated a variety of ornamental designs which were quite unique. The magical power which this pottery exerts on anyone who studies it—and it is quite impossible to appreciate its beauty and importance unless you discover their secrets for yourself—is the finest testimony to the matchlessness of an art which provides scholars with an inexhaustible debating

point. Indeed, these vessels show such a wide variety of designs that the range from almost realist representation to the plain symbol is infinite. It matters little whether the simplification is in response to instinct or volition, to inhibition when confronted with the living creature, or a religious precept; the strength of the intellectualization and abstraction with which forms were stylized proves that the Susian potter possessed an aesthetic subtlety, a sense of taste, a decorative genius and a versatility within his mental processes which are not consistent with a primitive—however we may understand this word. In this light it is quite possible that Elamite pottery of the fourth millennium was the product of an ancient civilization, for with the earliest specimens (in Susa Ia) it shows a full command of its aesthetic devices and techniques.

In Susa II, as we said, the archaeologist finds a very different civilization. Possibly the new race of invaders came from India, for themes similar to those of Mohenjo-Daro are to be observed—particularly in seals. On the other hand, pictograph writing is replaced by the cuneiform of the Mesopotamians. We should add that it would be wrong to speak of a decadence; when we consider the in-the-round animal images and the beautifully finished copper vessels, we have to acknowledge that whilst the Elamites of Susa II possessed a different aesthetic sense from that of their predecessors it has its interest none the less. The quality of the pottery is undeniably inferior to what it was some centuries earlier under Susa I (it was around 3500 B.C. that the change occurred), but the technique of working in metals shows immense progress. As we recognize the parallels between the civilizations of the Elamites and the Sumerians, who certainly had contact with one another, we find our attention drawn to resemblances between Susa Ia and the El Obeid period, and between Susa Ib, Ic and Id and the Uruk period; Susa II, meanwhile, shows a greater kinship with the civilization of Jemdet Nasr.

Tepe Moussian presents another aspect of Elamite pottery—less important than that of Susa perhaps, but still interesting for the similarities and differences it reveals. At Moussian the custom was for total burial, and whole skeletons in curiously vaulted tombs have been found there. Sometimes the corpse seems to have been partially cremated, half-burning, as at Tripolje in the Ukraine. The decoration of funeral vessels was less intellectualized than at Susa I, and not as rough as that of Susa II; there is a mixture of geometrical and naturalist themes as though the ancient Elamite symbols were no longer understood. The art of Moussian is undoubtedly not as purely Persian as that of Susa, and Mme. Amalia Herz very rightly recognized the differences when she distinguished

"two related civilizations, possibly deriving from the same source, but showing much greater differences between them than those between Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt or Nubia".<sup>1</sup>

This parallel deserves to be quoted: "The characteristic features of the first (Susa I) are monochrome pottery, second stage burial (which developed into cremation as time went on), and, as M. Jordan showed a short time ago, buildings of small, flat, dried mud bricks. With the second (Moussian II), we see polychrome pottery and the complete burial of the corpse, often in funeral buildings of stone or plano-convex bricks by which stone was replaced. From earliest times, these two civilizations influenced one another, either on the territory of Elam or in Mesopotamia and India, and—in countries so remote from one another—taking rather different forms. Accordingly, in the deepest layers of Ur and Uruk—which were called the El Obeid layers by those who excavated them—we find pottery whose decorations if not its shape link it with Susa I and Moussian I: the pointed cap and the long loin-cloth typical of proto-Elam I, the sash passing over the left shoulder and above the right armpit (this too was probably a characteristic part as we see it again in India), and point-snouted demons like those on a basin of Persepolis; but the dead here were fully buried. On the other hand, second stage burial is to be observed at all levels in Susa, with the exception of a very short interval when Mesopotamian influence made itself very strongly felt during the third dynasty of Ur. But pottery changed, showing geometrical rather than figured decoration, then vessels were covered with red slip whilst the design remained black. At one stage painting disappeared completely, but finally, monochrome and polychrome figured designs re-emerged in Susa II. Dress also changed: the pointed cap was replaced by wigs and the flat tiara, the loin-cloth became short, and the flounced dress and the large cloak made their appearance. There was building in flat and plano-convex bricks. In India, pottery was red and black at Harappa, and polychrome at Mohenjo-Daro; corpses were burnt on terraces, and buildings were made exclusively of dried mud or flat bricks; features of dress are reminiscent of the El Obeid layer of Mesopotamia, of Susa II, of Temple G at Assur, and . . . Mycenae."

We should not feel surprised that the pottery of Moussian shows so many points of contact with so many other countries. The pottery of Nehavend, found in graves as different from those of Moussian as they are from the modes of burial in use in Susa, invites extremely interesting comparisons, but the vessels of Damghan-Tepe Hissar are the most intriguing of all for they show ornamental themes just

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Archéologique*, 1932.

like those found on the pre-historic Chinese vases of Honan. The magical distortion of human forms leading into nightmare apparitions; animal stylizations like those of Susa I; very curious heraldic simplifications of birds; and finally, geometrical combinations which seem of Far-Eastern inspiration: these are the manifold elements of the pottery of Damghan-Tepe Hissar. This site, which was discovered by Schmidt in 1933, proved extraordinarily prolific. Spreading over the period from the fourth to the first millennium B.C., there are four clearly differentiated cultures. The first, Tepe Hissar I, is plainly related to that of Susa in Elam. Its pottery shows the same characteristics, with the same painting and the same style of decoration as that of Susa I, though less delicate. With the second, a foreign element appears. The pottery no longer resembles Susa's but is more of the type which Wulsin discovered recently in Asterabad. It is grey and only vaguely Elamite in character. From this we may deduce that alien influences, possibly from Baluchistan or Central Asia, entered upon a scene which, hitherto, had been exclusively Persian. After Tepe Hissar II, which takes up the whole of the third millennium, we find Tepe Hissar III, whose character is set forth by a city of very considerable importance. This city reached its height between 2000 and 1600 B.C., when Tepe Hissar suffered an invasion, following which it was plundered and destroyed by fire. The excavations by Arthur Upham Pope enable us to form a very clear picture of what happened. The city was taken by surprise. We can assume that its riches, its comfort and its splendid monuments roused the envy of the hordes who threw themselves upon it one night. They began their attack by throwing flaming torches into the corn granaries. Roused by the fire, the inhabitants were easily slaughtered. Among the ruins, over 1,600 skeletons were found. The fire swept over the whole city which was almost completely destroyed. The inhabitants had no time to flee; overcome by the fumes, they could only put up feeble resistance to their enemies; their bodies were found piled on one another near the gates and on stairways. Among the most pitiful victims of the tragedy, the body was found of a girl who had lain down to die so gracefully, that her limbs, which were adorned with jewellery, fell into a most affecting and harmonious attitude. In another part, there were the remains of a youth whose posture suggested the most terrible agony. No doubt he had been overcome by the fumes as he held an onyx vase tightly under his arm, probably hoping to save it from the fury of the attackers. He had thought of saving nothing but this delicate, transparent piece of stone which was with him at his death and which archaeologists found pressed against his fragile skeleton.

Tepe Hissar IV marks the arrival of another race again, certainly



from Central Asia, for the skeletons of this period show very clear Mongoloid features. The jewels with which they were buried recall those of the Scythians and Sarmatians. Some of their funerary treasures, influenced by the art of the nomads—by what is referred to today as the art of the Steppes—show remarkable affinities with some of the objects of the Ordos as found on the frontiers of Mongolia and China.

The Sassanid period of Damghan is no less interesting than the pre-historic periods of Tepe Hissar. Dr. Schmidt cleared the ruins of a very beautiful Sassanid palace; it was also very important for the evidence it gave of the diffusion of a culture which was thought hitherto to have been limited to the south and west of Persia because no examples of it were found in the north and east. The Sassanid palace consequently filled the gap by proving that the culture had extended to that part of the country as well. Of course, it cannot be compared to those of Kars I Shirin, of Ctesiphon, or of Chahur Takun; there is something provincial in its decoration and in its style generally, but it proves how Sassanid art flourished, even in the centres of least importance. It can be compared with the Sassanid palace found by Langdon at Kish, near a Christian or Manichean temple. The layout is the same and the splendid sculpture with which it is adorned clearly derived its inspiration from the same source. Its complicated and skilful stucco decorations are directly related to the decoration of the palaces found by Rice and Reitlinger at Hira, and to the ornamental bas-reliefs of Ctesiphon which were studied by the Germano-American expedition. It gives a very full picture of the variety of decorative themes which were blended in Sassanid art—a blend, pre-eminently of Arab and traditional Persian motifs which were later to be combined in carpets—and the survival of certain very ancient Sumerian themes like the S-shaped sign for water, which was endowed with many symbolic properties, linked with the animal figures of stags and boars.

At Syalk, near Kashan, there is an acropolis which was inhabited from the fourth to the first millennium. The Louvre's excavations, conducted by R. Ghirshman, brought to light the remains of very different civilizations which succeeded one another on this site over a period of three thousand years. Among their ruins, the cultures of Susa, of Damghan, of Rey and the shores of the Caspian are represented. Also to be observed is a relationship between the art of Syalk and Luristan, and similarities between the peoples of these two areas, who were both occupied with farming, hunting and rearing horses.

One cannot lay too much emphasis on the altogether extra-

ordinary nature of the pottery found at Syalk, for it throws a new light on the ties of Iran with Mesopotamia and India. Sir Aurel Stein's excavations at Fars and Makran, the ruins of Damghan, Samarra, Asterabad and Persepolis, have revealed art of great originality which is confirmed by the vases of Syalk, whose forms and decoration represent a type never previously encountered until now. The most remarkable specimens of the pottery are flasks made with a hard-grained clay, usually whitish grey, but sometimes tinted with red and brown. With their very decorative handles and extremely long spouts, these vessels show a very great variety of designs, ranging from the simplest geometrical themes, scalloped and chequered patterns, to realist animal decorations—galloping horses which even Chinese painters would not have disowned. Side by side with the *metope style*, which recalls the most ancient painted pottery of Susa, there is the astonishing figure of a bull with butterfly wings, curiously reviving the bull theme common in the Persian pottery of the third millennium where it had probably arrived from India.

Syalk was capped by a huge palace, dating from the beginning of the third millennium, and whose foundations still back on to the rock of the Acropolis. These artificial foundations represent a gigantic piece of work which enables us to gauge the importance of the town. We can also appreciate it from the size of the Necropolis discovered in 1934. The so-called *Cemetery B* belongs to the Bronze Age; in it there were vessels in which the art of the potter was clearly influenced by that of the bronze-worker. *Cemetery A* contains graves in which objects of bronze and iron exist side by side.

The magnificent pottery of the fourth and third millennia abruptly disappeared at the end of the third for no known reason. We are also unable to explain why Syalk was completely abandoned at the beginning of the first millennium and has never been occupied since. The problem of dating the pottery has not been completely solved, and the various influences evident in the forms of the vessels and the treatment of the animal figures which decorate them have still to be clarified. "The date of this pottery is still disputed," writes Arthur Upham Pope, Artistic Adviser to the Persian Government. "By some it is judged contemporary with the pottery of Luristan, with which it shows resemblances in colour, technique and decoration, though the pottery of Syalk is finer. But the pottery of Luristan has not yet been definitely dated. The embellishments of Syalk ceramics have their parallel in the painted pottery of Alishar Höyük in Anatolia, dating from the expansion of the Hittite Empire in the middle of the second millennium, and the geometrical designs show a certain relationship with Hittite vessels."

The pottery of Luristan has still not been sufficiently studied;

most interest has been taken in bronzes, first discovered in this region by chance, and subsequently sought illicitly by the inhabitants; they occasioned so much trade that the Persian Government was compelled to make it illegal to export them.

Luristan is a huge plainland country east of Kherka, inhabited in ancient times by a horse-rearing people who discovered the art of riding and harnessing the animals at a very early stage and made them the basis of their trade. Professor Minorsky devoted an important study to the inhabitants of Luristan, and Salomon Reinach observed in a commentary on his conclusions, "The old inhabitants of this region raised horses, and as attested by the bronzes which have been found in the earth, they harnessed and rode them. According to Sir H. Rawlinson, this was in the Nisaeen fields of ancient Media, where horses were very common and were widely coveted (Herod vii. 110, Strabo ix. 13). The Greek name, Nisaea, occurs in the inscription of Darius at Bisutun. Alishtar is reached from Marsin, south of Bisutun, where there are some extant pieces of rock sculpture which Herzfeld believes to be Median. If it is not to the Medes (who flourished in the area between 1000 and 700 B.C.) that we must attribute the bronzes of Luristan—and they seem much earlier than those dates—we need to go back to the Kassites or the Kossaeans, who inhabited the country between Susa and Ecbatana, and of whom mention is first found around 2000 B.C. In about 1750 B.C. they took possession of Babylon where a Kassite dynasty reigned from 1760 to 1180 B.C. . . . Even before the beginning of the history of the Medes, some Indo-European elements (non-Iranian) entered among the Kassites. The little glossary of Kassite words with their Babylonian translation, which was published by Delitzsch, contains some elements which appear to be Hindu; an example of this is the Sun-God, Shuryash—in Sanscrit 'Surya', sun. The Babylonians called the horse 'the ass from the mountains of the east', and we have known for some time that the Kassites introduced the animal into Mesopotamia. In short, from the geographical standpoint, the Luristan objects which are connected with horsemanship confirm what the Greeks said about the horses of Nisa. From the historical standpoint, among these discoveries, which are probably of different periods, we can distinguish a threefold influence: that of the Indo-European infiltrations, of Kassite civilization, and of elements borrowed from Babylon and Media."<sup>1</sup>

Almost all Luristan bronzes are connected with the horse. There are rein-rings, bits, and saddle and bridle ornaments. There is consequently no surprise in observing the striking relationship they present with the bronzes of the Steppe peoples, with the art of the

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Archéologique*, 1931.



Fig. 18 Winged moufflon, bronze bit, Luristan

Ordos, and with the Scythian and Sarmatian treasures which have been found in Hungary and Russia. The art of Luristan is directly connected with the art of the nomads, and it is possible, as some maintain, that Scythian art took its themes and techniques from Persia. From Luristan, they would have reached China through the medium of the nomads. Even in Japan Salmony found rein-rings similar to those of Luristan, on which the Babylonian Gilgamesh and the Chinese Tao-Tieh appear together. The famous Tao-Tieh, which, according to Borovka's theory, was introduced into China by the Scythians, probably originated in Luristan where it appears very frequently. In a fine article in the *Burlington Magazine*,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Percival Yetts studied the relationship between China and Luristan. From this it emerges that Persia served to transmit themes and influences between Mesopotamia and the Far East. Furthermore, it is not impossible that the trade in horses for which Luristan was renowned also led to trade in bronze trappings and chariot ornaments—a logical sequence.<sup>2</sup>

As a consequence of this trade, Luristan became the fertilizing element for possibly the whole of Asia. The exhibition of Ordos bronzes at Vienna in December, 1936, showed items side by side which, whether they came from Persia or the Far East, still revealed

<sup>1</sup> August, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> Dussaud in Syria, 1930, and A. Godard, *Les Bronzes du Lougistan*, Paris, 1932.

a close kinship. From the plains of Central Persia to the loop of the Yellow River where the Ordos dwelt, right up to the Steppes of Noin-Oula, nomad peoples, the bearers of forms, themes and styles, were constantly passing through. In this way, even into Central Asia and China, the horse-traders of Luristan were able to bring the Sumerian themes which are exemplified on the axe of Kelermes. It was through them that the nomads of the Steppes made contact with Mesopotamian art, whose motifs they so willingly perpetuated.

"The art of the Steppes", writes René Grousset, "occurring in the Cimmerian Bosphorus, in the Caucasus, in the confines of Iran and Turkestan, in Siberia and Mongolia, is distinctive, though in no way original, and basically at variance temperamentally and technically with the aesthetic of the Chinese. . . . It is in the most ancient Chaldaeo-Assyrian glyptics that we meet the heraldic animal theme again, a theme which Achaemenid-Sassanid Persia must have received and diffused over all the routes of the Russo-Turkestani and Altai Steppes. If we dip into the pages of the Delaporte Catalogues, which deal with the collections of Sumero-Accadian, Babylonian and Sargonid cylinder seals, we shall find the griffins, the eagles and the eagle-shaped monsters which adorn the heads of cervidae, the fantastic groups of wild creatures—symmetrically conflicting with one another, and clutching ibex or bovidae, and sometimes even the turned nostrils so beloved of the art of the Steppes".<sup>1</sup>

On Damghan pottery we have seen the geometrical motifs which commonly occur in the prehistoric Chinese pottery of Honan, and the heraldic birds which passed unchanged into Scythian bronzes. In their turn, the Luristan bronzes provided a link between Mesopotamia and the Far East; they faithfully reproduced the motifs of Kish and Ur, the great copper bas-relief from the temple of Ningirsu, for example, or the harp motifs of Queen Shubad. It was in this way that the dealers, whose unique concern, no doubt, was to get the best possible price for their herds of Nisaeen horses, performed work of supreme importance by scattering an artistic seed. To the beauty of the Luristan bronzes we must add the inestimable merit which they gained as they conveyed, from the banks of the Euphrates to the shores of the China Sea, artistic values which took root in new soils, grew, and bore fruit. The Ural bronzes, exhibited in the museum of Krasnoyarsk, the Siberian treasure of Ischimka, the bronzes of Tomsk, all recently discovered, with their realistic or fantastic animals, still bear the trace of the art of Luristan. Though its function, in the strictest sense, was not to create but pre-eminently to receive, we can now see how it became creative by conveying objects

<sup>1</sup> *Les Civilisations de l'Orient*, Vol. III, p. 132.

which, in their turn, fertilized the Steppes and much of the art of China.

In its ancient splendour, Agbatana or Ecbatana resembled the amazing castle of Kandiz, which was said to be surrounded by seven walls made of gold, silver, steel, bronze, iron, crystal and lapis-lazuli. The description given by Herodotus of Ecbatana recalls this magnificence, with the difference that the seven walls were painted and not made of precious metals. Modern archaeologists have been unable to recover its lost glory, but the ruins of the ancient city are nevertheless of immense interest, and when they have been finally cleared, perhaps they will reveal a sight as dazzling as the new Persepolis, and archives full of political and historical documents.

Pasargadae, which is situated about 50 miles north of Persepolis, in a large plain encircled by mountains, must have been no less magnificent. The memory of fabulous gardens, built in terraces round the "throne of Solomon", is preserved in legend. It was founded by Cyrus in 559 B.C. but its life as a capital was a short one. Only forty years after it was founded, it was replaced by Persepolis as the centre of the empire, and the town, never completed, was abandoned. It had in any event always had something unstable about it, with its lightly constructed buildings and its tents, which made it more like a nomad encampment than a strong and lasting city. The moral centre of this artificially massed group of dwellings, which, like the other arbitrarily created cities, Tell El Amarna and Khorsabad, did not long survive its founder, was the tomb of Cyrus. Pasargadae, like Akhnaton's capital, was far larger in conception than it was in fact; it remains as little more than a design, an unfulfilled plan to build a city, and its scattered monuments seem to have no organic unity, products of a freakish outburst and a whim, neither of them sufficient to create lasting work.

Persepolis, on the other hand, stands as the most splendid of the accomplishments of the Persian kings. It was one of the most magnificent capitals the world has ever known, and the ruins which have been cleared in recent years give an almost unique impression of nobility and grandeur. The existence of Persepolis is associated on one hand with ancient Persian legend and on the other with the Bible. For this reason it is sometimes referred to as the "theatre of Solomon" (Mal'ab Suleiman) and the "throne of Jamshid" (Takht I Jamshid). The name of Persepolis, which has been fixed by tradition, is incorrect; it should be called Persopolis, using the Greek form which became customary from the period of Alexander, who destroyed the city.

Those parts of the palaces which have been cleared and restored are now revealed as such a magnificent group of monuments that

Professor Breasted hailed the discovery as one of the finest and most important of our time. It is only now that we are in a position to realize what the Achaemenid capital was like at its height in the reigns of Darius and Xerxes. The huge apadana, with its court-room, its broad staircases and their banisters sculptured with bas-reliefs, offers wonderful harmony in the midst of the vast, naked plain. Achaemenid art's most sublime fulfilment in the marriage of naturalism and noble simplicity is realized in the bas-reliefs of Persepolis as we see them today. It is immensely illuminating to compare the photographs taken of the ruins in 1929 or 1930 with those taken after the excavations of 1932; here, indeed, we see the resurrection of a dead city—its former splendour restored. Its arrangement of terraces and stairways, so well combined for displays of imperial grandeur when the king received homage from his subject peoples; the compulsive effects of their settings and their slow but strong vitality; and an expression of the holy majesty of royal might: these are restored in a dazzling spectacle, barely hinted at in the earlier excavations.

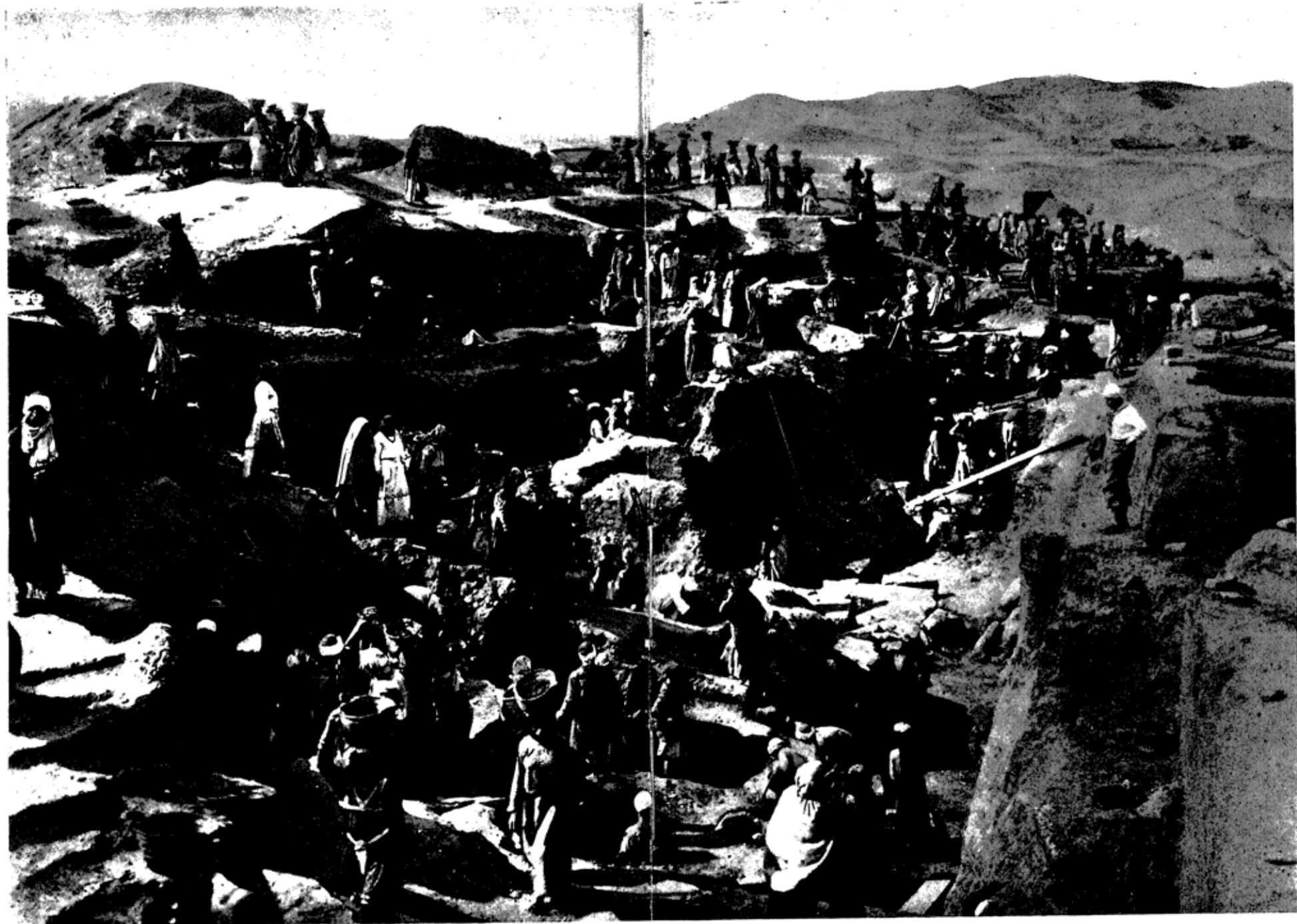
Description can never do justice to the superlative qualities of Achaemenid architecture—its nobility and lightness. The sense of space, the art with which even emptiness itself is used as an element of grandeur, can only be fully appreciated now that the ruins of Persepolis have been almost completely cleared. The technique of the Persian architects, and even more, the aesthetic they based on such perfect treatment of grace and the horizontal; the happy contrast between the tall thin columns and the immense expanse of the plain; the magnificence of the sculptured gates, outlined within their frames against the sky; and the airy art which wielded the atmosphere itself like one of its materials: these convey much that is precious to the student of beauty. The historian can also learn a great deal by studying the bas-reliefs of the stairways, where all the subject peoples of the Persian Empire are represented—distinctive by their ethnic features, their dress, their weapons and the characteristic objects they offered to the king in homage or tribute. The cosmopolitan aspect of Persepolis, which was less purely Iranian than Pasargadae, can be recognized in its borrowings from Assyrian art; but the Mesopotamian heritage, which in some ways is the basis of Achaemenid art, is so well adapted to its new needs, so well assimilated by the sculptors who made it an element of personal and original creation, that it is the truly Iranian contribution which, in the midst of this cosmopolitanism, we find supremely engaging.

As if a new epoch had begun with Dr. Herzfeld's excavations in the ruins of Persepolis, discoveries followed one another in succession. The terraces and stairways had barely been cleared when, in 1934,

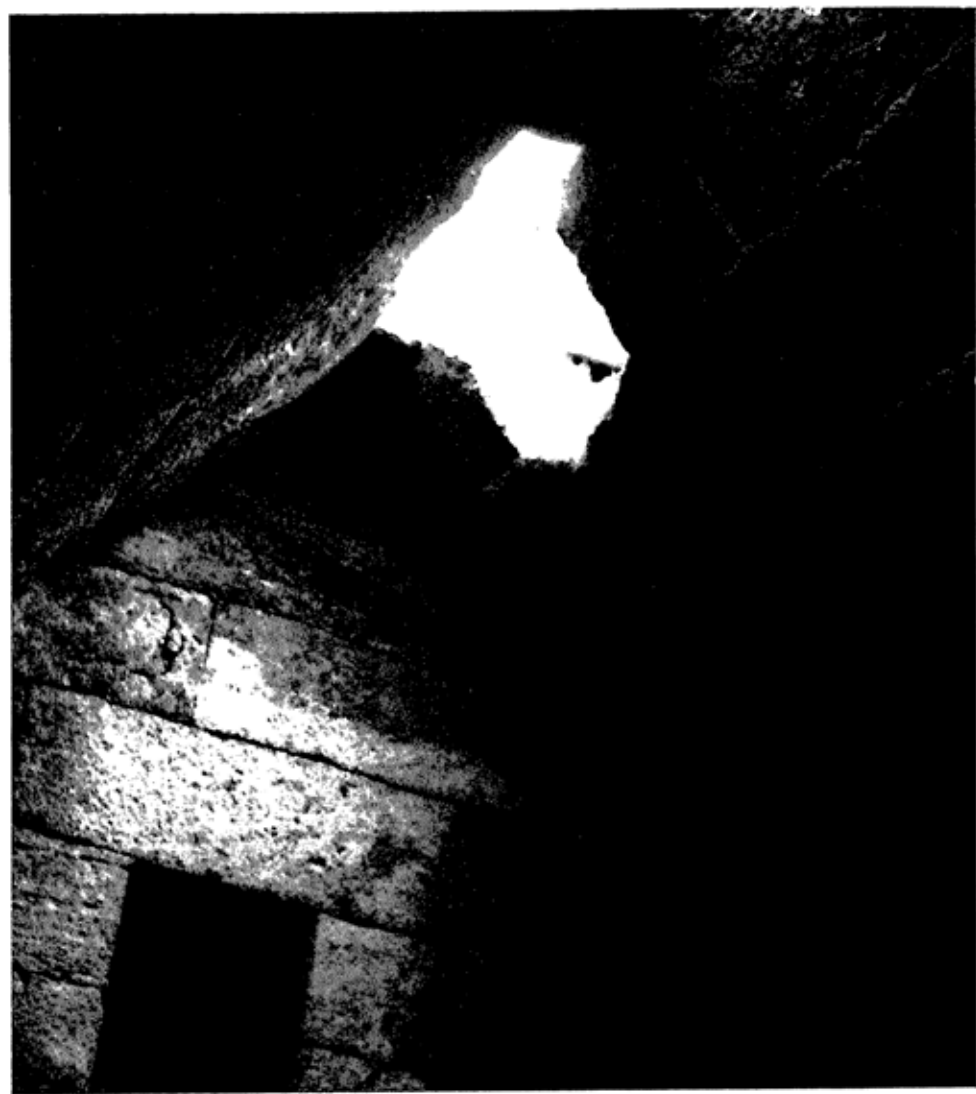


Solar bark of Giza at the foot of the pyramid of Cheops





Discovery of the tomb of Psusennes, Tanis, in 1939



Tomb at Ras-Shamra, Syria

a library was found containing 29,000 tablets which have not yet been fully deciphered but already show signs of being highly significant documents. And then, in 1936, chance enabled archaeologists from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago to recapture the moment of the city's foundation when they discovered some gold plaques which had been laid during the building of the palace. The inscription in three languages, Elamite, Persian and Babylonian, extolled the magnificence of "the great king, the king of kings, the king of the nations".

A little while after this precious find, seven stone tablets were uncovered which related the victories of Xerxes over his enemies and glorified the triumph of this king over the adversaries of Zoroaster. The text is very valuable from the historical standpoint because it enumerates all the countries contained in Xerxes' empire, but perhaps even more so from the religious stand point because it represents Xerxes waging a holy war against the infidels, destroying their temples, proscribing their beliefs, and imposing the cult of Ahura Mazda on all his subjects and tributaries. The text, which includes "the Ionians who dwell in the sea" among the subjects of Persia, can thus be dated certainly as earlier than the Battle of Salamis, which freed Greece from the Iranian yoke.

The Persian religion, based on the cult of fire, left few temples; the cult, a very simple one and normally observed on high places, did not entail many ceremonies. For this reason it has been observed that, in contrast with what normally obtains in the religions of the ancient East, palaces had much greater architectural importance than sanctuaries. The most characteristic place of worship in this respect is referred to in legend as the Throne of Rustam, which Sir Percy Lorraine discovered in the region of Shahariyar. At Kake i Dujhtar as well there is the same arrangement of a sanctuary dedicated to the preservation of fire; the building had a cupola where the supernatural fire burned without fuel, so we are told, enduring incredibly in a strictly enclosed space, and in a high place where sacrifices were performed. The Temple of Kuh i Khwaja is very much the same.

Kuh i Khwaja was discovered by Sir Aurel Stein. The ruins rise up at the summit of a rocky island in the middle of a lake. According to tradition this is the holiest place in all Iran. The Avesta says that of all the 2,224 mountains of Iran—and this figure should be taken as symbolic and not geographically factual—Mount Ushida is the only one which is really holy. There is little doubt that this mythical mountain, situated in the middle of Lake Kansavya according to ancient texts, can be identified with the hill of Kuh i Khwaja. It was on this height that Soshan, on the day of the last judgment,

was to appear in all his glory. This holy place has always been held sacred; all Persian literature, both religious and secular, refers to it, and the Christian legend of the magi has direct connections with it. The ruins it contains—of palaces and temples—makes it doubly interesting for the modern archaeologist, who is provided with the material he needs to study the traditional layout of the Temple of Fire. As Iranian architecture, in turn, had immense influence on Georgian and Armenian architecture, which affected Roman art to a considerable extent, these buildings give the oldest and best solutions to the problem of the cupola which so exercises scholars' minds.

Apart from the architectural solutions which it puts forward, the Fire Temple of Kuh i Khwaja is also interesting for its paintings, which, though very damaged, provide an extremely arresting view of fresco art in Hellenist Persia. The decorative elements are related to the ornamental themes found in the Hellenist art of Bactria, and the figures of deities, especially, are similar in certain respects to the Gothico-Buddhist sculpture of Afghanistan. Here, Hellenic traditions combined so distinctively with the Iranian spirit that an extraordinary new style was born of their association, a blend of Oriental techniques and Western concepts—and vice versa—inspiring Herzfeld to write: "It is remarkable to observe in the first century A.D., where Iran, Afghanistan and Baluchistan meet in the Far East, a type of painting which one could imagine in a Gothic cathedral or in a palace of the Ghibellines in Sicily."

Whilst we have quite a clear picture of the formal life of the kings from their palaces, and of the Zoroastrian religion from the ruins of the Fire Temples, all the information normally provided by tombs is lacking where historical Persia, at least, is concerned (in prehistoric Persia, on the other hand, tombs give us the fullest information through the discovery of Elamite vessels). There were no tombs in historic times, for bodies had to be exposed and not buried. Nevertheless, there are certain graves attributed by tradition to great kings: four at Nawsh i Rustam, three at Persepolis containing the remains of the Hyastaspides, and the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae. They are adduced as evidence for the claim that burial was reserved for the king but this is contradicted by the discovery of a cemetery near Persepolis where the graves were certainly occupied by the dead of every class. Chroniclers even obligingly describe the treasures placed in the tombs of the kings, and relate how the body was preserved by coating it with honey—a curious method of embalming.

At all events, the absence or rarity of Iranian tombs deprives us of the many documents on manners, customs and ways of life normally provided by funerary goods. We know little more than the

tombs of the Jewish colonies at Lindjan and Hamadan, and the catacombs of the Island of Kharg in the Persian Gulf, which was inhabited by a population of pearl fishers. These tombs, hollowed out of the island's coral rock, offer a curious amalgam of Sassanid style and Palmyrene themes. Although Kharg is near to Bahrain, their burial grounds cannot be compared; Bahrain still retains all its mystery, whilst the tombs of Kharg, with their Nestorian symbols and Syriac inscriptions, probably go back to the third century A.D. and were used by a Christian community.

The catacombs of Kharg are pre-eminently interesting for the composite character of their architecture; blended in it are Hellenist elements, Jewish themes, and the influence of the syncretic compound of Eastern and Western art found at Petra. They are intriguing as marks of the thrust of Christianity during this period through the Persian Gulf towards India.

## CHAPTER VI

### EGYPT

FEW COUNTRIES have been so continuously and sedulously explored as Egypt. Scholarly interest has always been attracted by a country where funeral observance had been perfected as an art, where a dry climate and the protection of the sand had faithfully preserved ruins accumulated in the course of centuries. It might seem that Egypt, so endlessly subjected to archaeological research, would have nothing more to offer, but she is still unexhausted. In recent years, civilizations never dreamed of have been uncovered, making its culture older by thousands of years; the sites most thoroughly explored—Deir el Bahri, Thebes, the Valley of the Kings, Saqqara and Giza—are almost constantly producing new discoveries.

For this reason Egypt is universally held, even by the most indifferent, as the land *par excellence* of ancient times. The mystery of the Sphinx and the Pyramids, and the fantastic wealth of the Pharaohs are a stimulus for popular imagination. Whilst much more important discoveries are still unheard of by the general public, the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb has been analysed and commented upon in newspapers, not so much for its historical or aesthetic interest as for the material wealth which it contained.

But discoveries of this kind are rare. Not every archaeologist has the good fortune of Carnarvon and Carter, who were on the point of giving up their work in despair when they finally discovered the tomb of Tutankhamen, or Morgan who found a horde of royal jewels in a pyramid at Dahshur, or of Emil Brugsch, who was one day overwhelmed to find himself confronted by an array of twenty royal mummies in their sarcophagi. The archaeologist must work hard, and often with poor results. Arthur Weigall tells how, after weeks of clearing and excavating, he reached a tomb which contained nothing but an old French newspaper which had been left by an archaeologist who had been there before him, and how disappointed he was when all he found at the end of a season's work was the mummy of a cat.

And not only other experts had been there before him; robbers, usually forestalling the curiosity of the archaeologist, had made a clean sweep of the funeral goods, only leaving articles of little value

in the graves. Fortunately these objects of small value are the ones which scholars normally covet most. Robbers are the curse of Egypt for they often attack even the best guarded tombs, well armed and in a body. Although it is usually preferable to leave everything where it was found, it should not be forgotten that—in spite of all precautions—the thieves allow nothing to stand in the way of their greed. This was proved when it was decided to leave the mummy of Amenophis II in his tomb; the iron doors were found forced in—in spite of the keepers who were supposed to ensure the peace of the dead Pharaoh. The articles which had been placed in the sarcophagus near the body had disappeared, and the mummy itself, wrenched from its case, had been roughly handled by the bandits; believing that a treasure was concealed in its breast, they had torn it open.

For a very long time Egypt was a prey to unscrupulous experts or to amateur explorers who were only concerned with collecting objects of value and cared nothing for the scientific data which are archaeology's real treasure; a prey also to native thieves who, without method or principle, ravage the tombs they discover, but not without appeasing the spirits of the earth and the spirits of the dead beforehand with a sacrificed goat.

But to the archaeologist, the discovery of an intact tomb is ample reward for all his efforts and disappointments, especially for the wonderful feeling of being the first to enter a place where no one has been for four or five thousand years. After the long and arduous work of excavating, the corridors are eventually cleared. It means crawling through narrow tunnels, using a plank to cross dangerous holes, and going back when the way is blocked by a blind alley intended to throw robbers off the track; all this must be contended with and often to find nothing more than an empty room—a false tomb. After renewed excavations the real tomb is finally reached.

"Imagine entering a town house which had been closed for the summer; imagine the stuffy room, the stiff, silent appearance of the furniture, the feeling that some ghostly occupants of the vacant chairs have just been disturbed, the desire to throw open the windows to let life into the room once more. That was perhaps the first sensation as we stood, really dumbfounded, and stared around at the relics of the life of over three thousand years ago, all of which were as new almost as when they graced the palace of Prince Yuua. Three armchairs were perhaps the first objects to attract the attention: beautifully carved wooden chairs, decorated with gold. Belonging to one of these was a pillow made of down and covered with linen. It was so perfectly preserved that one might have sat upon it or tossed it from this chair to that without doing it injury. Here were

fine alabaster vases, and in one of these we were startled to find a liquid, like honey or syrup, still unsolidified by time. Boxes of exquisite workmanship stood in various parts of the room, some resting on delicately wrought legs. . . . In all directions stood objects gleaming with gold undulled by a speck of dust, and one looked from one article to another with the feeling that the entire human conception of Time was wrong. These were the things of yesterday, of a year or so ago. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Ancient Egypt imparts such a strong feeling of its present reality through the perfect state of preservation of its relics that the veil which covered Tutankhamen's sarcophagus was in wonderful condition, whilst the cloths of the Middle Ages have usually disappeared or come down to us in a sorry state of decay. There is something piquant as well as fascinating in finding things exactly as they were left by their last owner. In seeing thumb prints on the seal of a tomb of the Old Kingdom, in observing the footprints left by slaves in the sand before a closed door as they were leaving after walling up a vault 4000 years ago, there is an emotional experience which no other country can match. Whenever an Egyptian tomb is found intact there is always the overriding impression that nothing has been moved. Invariably—and all archaeologists agree on this—there is a strong feeling that "it belongs to the present" which even long familiarity cannot diminish.

Egypt is unique—though in certain circumstances Mexico and Central Asia share the quality—in contributing a romantic element to archaeological research which serves to enhance its fascination. The pleasure of bringing a dead city back to life is all the greater when it re-emerges in the light with all the fullness and colour of its former existence. Every tomb has its mystery and when this is solved by the archaeologist, it is as though a very ancient tale had become a story of the present day.

Some years ago, Egyptologists excavating a tomb in the area of the Temple of Deir el Bahri found an overturned sarcophagus and objects scattered in the corridor, suggesting that for some reason the burial had been abruptly interrupted. The mummy of Princess Entiu-ny, which was identified by inscriptions on the coffin, had retained its bandages, a garland of flowers and a heavy ceremonial wig, but the jewels and golden masks had disappeared. The enigma was solved when the coffins and funeral goods were cleared, revealing a pit which the bearers had been unable to cross with the sarcophagus; the tomb, thought to be empty, was already occupied. With no further concern for the unfortunate princess, everything was left in the corridor in a state of disorder, just as the explorers found

<sup>1</sup> A. Weigall, *The Glory of the Pharaohs*, London, 1923, p. 128.



it. But before leaving, the bearers took care to strip the corpse of its gold mask and jewels. The original tomb, which was that of Queen Meryet Amun, had also been stripped of its contents, with the exception of some baskets and boxes containing *ushabtis*—the statuettes of substitutes, acting for the deceased when she might be called upon by the gods to perform a menial task in the after-life. It became possible to date the tomb when the underground corridors were observed to pass beneath the Temple of Deir el Bahri in such a way that at one point the foundations could be distinguished through the ceiling; from this it was concluded that the tunnel had been hollowed out after the foundations had been laid, for otherwise they would have collapsed over the empty space.

It was at Deir el Bahri again that the remains of a mutilated statue of Queen Hatshepsut were found among debris. This gave material proof of a well-known historic event—the iconoclastic fury with which Tuthmosis III, when he came to power on the death of Hatshepsut, made haste to wipe out all evidence of her reign. Disregarding the custom which enjoined her to yield authority to her stepson, the ambitious and overbearing Hatshepsut was not satisfied to act as his regent until he was able to rule; having achieved power, she was disinclined to be deprived of it. Violating tradition and custom, the widow of Tuthmosis II—a truly remarkable queen—claimed that she had been chosen as heir to the throne by her father Tuthmosis I, and she refused to yield the throne to the unfortunate Tuthmosis III. He was therefore obliged to live in the shadow of this dictatorial woman, who assumed all the attributes of a pharaoh, including his beard; her statues, at all events, show her with this distinguishing mark of masculinity.

Not all her images were bearded, however; some of them even allow her a certain feminine charm. But in official statues, showing her, not as a woman, but as *king* of Egypt, Hatshepsut was determined to relinquish none of her royal or masculine attributes.

The first decree issued by Tuthmosis III in the very year of the Queen's death was to the effect that her name and image should be removed from all public monuments. He would even have been willing to destroy all the buildings erected by Hatshepsut—among them the splendid Temple of Deir el Bahri with which her memory remains associated—but he could not throw down a holy place dedicated to Amun without committing sacrilege. He therefore contented himself by having anything which might call her to mind removed from it. That is how the statuettes, when hammered to pieces, came to be thrown among the rubble near the temple.

The images were still not totally destroyed, and in this we find a curious characteristic of the Egyptian mentality. Tuthmosis III

could not arrange matters as though Hatshepsut had never lived, but he was determined that no trace of her reign as *king* of Egypt should remain. The official statuettes which showed her in this capacity were consequently smashed to atoms: on the others he was content to have all insignia of royalty removed. Depending on their zeal or fancy, those given the task of destroying the images were sometimes satisfied to hammer the royal uraeus, to break the nose or put out the eyes, but in all of them they were careful to destroy the beard which was the most offensive symbol of usurpation.

The Temple of Deir el Bahri, which the unfortunate Hatshepsut had intended to make her funeral sanctuary and tomb, was the work of an architect of genius, Senmut, whose grave was found a short distance from his masterpiece. We cannot say that Hatshepsut instigated an artistic renaissance comparable to that of Akhnaton, but for the stimulus which she gave to the arts and sciences, as much as for her political acumen, the unhappy stepmother of Tuthmosis III deserves to survive the loss of her beard in human memory. The architect's tomb is extremely interesting and even moving for the visitor, because incomplete as it is, it still bears reference to the day when work on it was brought to a halt, the twenty-ninth day of the fourth month of the flood. This inscription, written in ink wherever the labourers' work was interrupted, gives no indication of why work was never resumed on the following day. It is to be assumed that Senmut died suddenly or fell into disgrace, or that the death of his patroness threw him into obscurity and exposed him to the wrath of Tuthmosis III, together with all those who represented the usurper-queen's faction at the court of Thebes.

The decoration of Senmut's tomb is not essentially different from that of other tombs of the same period. But it does contain something quite exceptional: a map of the sky drawn on the ceiling of the chamber, which gives some interesting information about the Egyptians' knowledge of astronomy. The twelve months are shown there as circles divided into twenty-four sectors. The constellations, with their signs and attributes are clearly indicated. Among them there is a fine illustration of Sirius, or Sothis, which provided the principle of the old Egyptian calendar according to the Sothic cycle.

This actually begins with the day when the heliacal rising of Sothis coincides with the beginning of the flood. "The Egyptian calendar," writes Gordon Childe, "that forms the most immediate forerunner of our own, was created in response to an imperative demand of Egyptian agriculture. The Nile is the very life of Egypt, and all agricultural operations upon which this prosperity and indeed the very existence of prince and peasant depend, are regulated by its flood that recurs annually with mathematical regularity. The

recurrence of this vital event was a challenge to the dwellers on the Nile to devise some more exact system of measuring time than the lunar reckoning of barbarians, in fact to effect an artificial reconciliation of the lunar and solar years in order that the necessary agricultural operations might be put in hand in due time. Now in the latitude of Memphis and Heliopolis at the apex of the Delta the beginning of the inundation coincides with the heliacal rising of Sothis, our Sirius; that is to say, Sirius appears on the horizon just before dawn on the same day as the flood reaches those cities. Hence some genius, resident presumably in Memphis or Heliopolis, elaborated a calendar for the guidance of cultivators in which the heliacal rising of Sothis was to mark the beginning of the official year and to give the signal for the cycle of labours in the field to start. The official year was to consist of twelve months of thirty days with five intercalary days superadded. Such a reconciliation of the primitive lunar calendar with the solar year was a really extraordinary achievement and implies a body of collected and systematized experience and a degree of forethought not to be found among barbarians. Yet the system must in all probability have been devised and brought into operation in the year 4236 before the beginning of our reckoning.

"A slight imperfection in the system makes it possible to calculate this date so exactly although no written documents have survived from so early an age. The Egyptian year fell short of the true solar year by just under six hours, a discrepancy that would at first pass unnoticed but would mean in a couple of centuries that the official seasons, 'Inundation,' 'Sowing,' 'Harvest,' could have no relation to the activities they had been designed to guide. In fact New Year's Day, which was at all times celebrated on the day of the heliacal rising of Sirius, would only coincide with the first day of the official year once in 1,461 years. This period is often termed a Sothic cycle. Now we know that a Sothic cycle began in A.D. 139, and it is possible to connect with the Sothic system the accession of several kings in the XVIIIth dynasty and of one (Senusert III) even as early as the XIIth. The beginning of the last-named dynasty cannot on the strength of the royal lists possibly be put later than 2000 B.C. Hence the introduction of the Sothic calendar must be assigned to a still earlier Sothic cycle either 2776 or 4236 B.C. But the calendar was already established under the pyramid builders of the IVth dynasty that reigned according to computations based upon the fragments of native annals earlier than 2776. Hence if the date for the pyramid age obtained by dead reckoning be accepted, the system must have been established as early as 4236, a thousand years before

Menes or our oldest inscribed monuments. That year may therefore rank as the earliest fixed date in human history."<sup>1</sup>

In the fifth millennium then, Egypt not only had a civilization which was based on agriculture and capable of methodically using the Nile's recurrent inundations, but a knowledge of astronomy sufficiently advanced to make calculations as complicated as those of the Sothic cycle. Recent excavations, indeed, tend to show that this civilization was even older, not by a few centuries but by several millennia; if we go back to their beginnings, we see that Egypt was inhabited by races who had already attained a high degree of civilization. History cannot yet enter into it, for dates are uncertain and subject to controversy. Among Egyptologists, some argue in favour of a long chronology and some of short; some are inclined to attribute the origins of Egyptian civilization to a time lost in antiquity whilst others, dismissing their calculations as fanciful, bring them forward to a time nearer our own.

It is difficult to date the ancient dynasties with any accuracy in relation to our own age, and Manetho's list of pharaohs is still the most reliable document we have. Unfortunately he does not deal with the great period of evolution which must have led to the accession of Menes, who was long held to be a mythical king and is now seen as living at the dawn of Egyptian history, with its long and incalculable prehistoric and protohistoric past extending far behind him.

To remedy this uncertainty and to establish a system of chronology by which discoveries could be placed in time, Sir Flinders Petrie had the ingenious idea of forming a list of sequence-dates which would provide relative chronology—not in relation to Christian times or some unknown origin, but according to the sequence of the objects themselves. The system is based on a series of dates which enable us to determine the relative antiquity of one tomb, for example, in relation to another. The only fixed point for sequence-dating is the reign of Menes, attributed to sequence-date 77, or s.d. 77 as it is normally abbreviated. Since we must accept that the period when Menes lived cannot itself be determined, it follows that sequence-dates cannot have any absolute value when we place them in time in relation to a known fact. It is equally impossible to say how long each one lasted. In effect, the system does not offer a basis for calculation but a means of classification in time, a chronological method in itself and for itself. Sequence-dates are numbered from 30 to 80, with the reign of Menes, as we said, occupying s.d. 77.

To establish a sequence of dates, Sir Flinders Petrie based his system on the modifications occurring in the types of jars found in tombs, and particularly on the time taken by the lips of the jars,

<sup>1</sup> V. Gordon Childe, *The Most Ancient East*, London, 1928, p. 6.

which were originally their handles, to degenerate into mere embellishments. This discovery, though based on a detail which many would have thought unimportant, is a very significant one because it made it possible to classify tombs specifically where previously they may have been lumped together as "predynastic" without any effort to determine at which point of the predynastic period they occurred.

Today sequence-dates are in the main generally accepted as they were determined by the famous Egyptologist. We should add that by beginning the sequence with 30 instead of 1, he was allowing for the possibility that later discoveries might fill the gap, and that a sequence from 1 to 30 might be established. But if s.d. 77 corresponds with Menes, at what date can we place the starting point of the succession—s.d. 30? This is practically impossible with the knowledge we have at present because the object of determining sequence-dates was to make up for the lack of *specific* chronology by *relative* chronology. Sir Flinders Petrie, however, put forward the theory that s.d. 30 corresponded roughly with the year 9000. The advocates of *short chronology* challenge this figure and suggest 7000. Opinions vary to such an extent that some say 5000, and others 4000, though there is no definite means of deciding between them.

Though it does not allow us to pinpoint a date in relation to our own age, or to measure the length of a sequence-date, the system is still an immensely valuable one; it has led to considerable progress in Egyptology by providing a means for classifying the shadowy period which, until quite recently, we were content to call predynastic, and which covers a still indeterminate number of millennia.<sup>1</sup>

There were so many monuments left by the Pharaohs, and these were so fascinating and important that, for a long time, archaeologists were content to study the treasures and make their observations about them without feeling the curiosity to go further and inquire what Egypt contained before the kingdom of the Pharaohs existed. At the very most, it may have been hinted that the proto-history of the people of the Nile could be as intriguing as their history. As for their life in prehistoric times, that was out of the question. An event had to take place which really had little to do with the work of Egyptologists before the study of prehistoric Egypt could begin. When the Khedive invited the most "representative" and important Europeans of the day to the opening of the Suez Canal, it so happened that the geologist Ancelin and the naturalist Hamy were among his guests.

These experts now established that the flint implements often found, and very like those studied in Europe, proved the existence

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Flinders Petrie, *Prehistoric Egypt*, London, 1920.

of a chipped stone civilization or civilizations. Ancelin examined and began to classify the flint tools which Egyptologists, who only found significance in temples, tombs, mummies and funerary equipment, had hitherto disregarded. The validity of this evidence was still disputed, nonetheless; the flint tools did not belong to any geological layer as they were found at the surface, and they were not accompanied by any animal remains which would have made even rough dating possible. They might therefore have belonged to the Egyptians of historic times, who for a long time did not know the use of metals and continued using stone.

After very full and serious study of the flint layers on the sites of Kahun, Tuhk and Meidum in particular, where examples of the work of the Stone Age were to be found in abundance, Sir Flinders Petrie confirmed the existence of a prehistoric Egyptian civilization; the Palaeolithic Age here was comparable to that of Europe since all its forms were represented—the Chalossian, the Chellean, the Acheulean, the Clactonian and the Mousterian. Specimens of skills peculiar to the Nile valley were found here, examples of the Caspian culture—(its like had only been found in Russia and Asia Minor) characterized by burins and points with rimmed backs, and—unique to Egypt—the Sebilian culture, which M. Vignard discovered in 1928 in the village of Sebil near Kom Ombo.

When once prehistoric Egypt had gained its credentials in this way, research and discoveries greatly increased. The Egyptologists who were opposed to Sir Flinders Petrie's theory ended by accepting it when, gaining everyone's agreement, he postulated that an unknown people, whom he described as the "new race", had invaded Egypt and brought their Stone Age civilization, of which examples are so widely spread, to live side by side with Egyptian civilization proper. Following the efforts of Morgan, Jéquier, Legrain, Daressy, Brunton, Gordon Childe, Winkler, Menghin and Vignard, it was possible to establish that before the Nile valley was invaded by sand and was still a jungle or savannah land roamed by elephant, rhinoceros, bubal and deer, it was inhabited by a people who hunted this game and used flint weapons for killing.

It is interesting to compare Egyptian palaeolithic tools with those found in the rest of Africa. This shows a relationship, if not an identical civilization, between the different peoples who first inhabited the Nile valley, and whose drawings are found on its rock walls just as they are found on the rocks of Hoggar, Fezzan and Libya. As though, in ages which cannot be historically determined, there was a kind of unity in the civilization of the Stone Age, we find Aterian tools in Algeria and the Sahara, as well as in Egypt in the Kharga Oasis south of Abydos, and in the Natufian

culture of Palestine. As for the small flint tools called microliths, they occur in Europe, Asia and the rest of Africa, as well as on the sites of Luxor and Helwan south of Cairo. In 1954, M. Abdel Tawab El-Hitta, an expert on the animals of ancient Egypt and its farming, found at Wadi Hauf, near Helwan, the remains of a farm of the neolithic period, where carbonized grains of corn and pieces of corn straw were mixed with flint tools and pieces of pottery.

What did the men of Petrie's "new race" look like? How did they dress? What were their skills? We really know little about the prehistoric Egyptian because the human remains found are very scant and yield little definite information. Was the *Damietta Man* who knew how to make pottery and used a mesolithic type of flint tool, an Egyptian? Is it not more likely—as Sergi and Capitan think—that he was the result of inter-breeding between the palaeolithic aboriginals and a riparian people from the northern Mediterranean who knew pottery-making, kept domestic animals, cultivated the soil, were beginning to discover architecture, and, at the mesolithic stage, were taking the preliminary steps for passing from chipped to polished stone tools? During the Natufian culture, which occurs both in Egypt and Palestine, there was probably an invasion of northern Mediterraneans; in 1939, Weinert showed that they had the same characteristics found among the Mediterraneans of the Cromagnon race. That there was a relationship between Egypt and Europe seems confirmed by the discovery in 1936, on the site of Erq el Ahmar in Palestine, but quite near to Egypt, of skeletons similar to those already found at Mugen in Portugal. An annoying circumstance which prevents the absolute dating of the flint tools found in a silt layer of the delta, is its unevenness and uncertainty concerning its age. At Damietta, Breasted and Moret estimated that a layer 20 metres deep represented sixteen thousand years.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "No trace of the mesolithic age has been found in Upper Egypt where sites are exposed at surface level, but it does occur in the delta where they are covered with silt, making exploration harder and discoveries more uncommon; more uncertain as well because there is no agreement on the time silt takes to accumulate. The view held by most geologists is that silt settles on a rock surface at the rate of about 10 centimetres a century. The maximum depth of silt in the delta is 30 to 40 metres, but we should remember that objects can sink into it, making dating very risky, and that how far they sink depends on their weight and density—metal or stone, for example, going deeper than pottery. Thus, statues of the Saitic period have been found at the same level as prehistoric bricks, but it would be absurd to conclude that they were contemporary." (Marcel Brion, *Histoire de l'Égypte*, Fayard, *Les Grandes Etudes Historiques*, 1954.) This reason also explains why most neolithic villages were buried under silt. Only those situated in an area not touched by the periodic flooding of the Nile preserved their shape, the layout of their houses, and most especially, their tombs. Nothing is left of the houses; because of the gentleness of the climate, they were lightly built of bundles of reeds, matting, or thin layers of pisé. Bricks appeared later on.

The theory that the various civilizations of Egypt were the work of the aborigines alone or of Petrie's problematical *new race* could not stand up when the elements which normally serve as tests in similar cases (anatomical peculiarities, language and illustrations of the human form) were examined. Where "race" was concerned, it was established as soon as human remains were studied, measured and roughly dated, that the Egyptian was the outcome of long and complicated cross-breeding. Brachycephalic and Dolichocephalic skulls have been found side by side, some clearly negroid and others purely semitic. Among the Brachycephalic ones there are some of Nubian type, some of Egyptian type and still other composite types difficult to classify. Despite the exceptional work by Stahr and Virchow, no definite conclusion has been reached; we meet a problem which Egyptologists and specialists in prehistoric studies are inclined to explain in different ways. Ripley believes there is a resemblance between the civilizations of Egypt and the Iberian Peninsula and sees early Egyptian man as akin to the Spaniard, the Greek and the southern Italian. According to Jéquier, he was closer to the Berber, and had little in common with Semites or Negroes. We gain some idea of the confusion inevitable in trying to imagine the Egyptian type of predynastic times (earlier, that is, than illustrations, which are very exact and anatomically conclusive) when Elliott Smith describes him as not very tall, thin, with black eyes and hair and a bronzed complexion, whilst Jéquier sees him as thickset, fair complexioned and with hair ranging from fair to black. In M. Vandier's scholarly *Manuel d'Archéologie Egyptienne*, published in 1952, there is a very full and definitive account of this question.<sup>1</sup>

In studying the petroglyphs of Upper Mertutek, M. de Chasseloup-Laubat was led to conclude that the Touaregs have a partial, but direct, family relationship with the inhabitants of predynastic Upper Egypt, and that early Egyptian art was fostered by the art of the Sahara. This prompts us to examine Egypt's petroglyphs, which were studied by the German archaeologist, Winkler. The outcome of his work was very important in that he showed interesting differences between the races who succeeded one another in Egypt (though sometimes they occupied the country at the same time) and was able to suggest from where they had come.

Winkler made a careful study of rock carvings, not in the Nile valley proper, but in the desert lands bordering it to the east and west. Until he did this, either the carvings were unknown or the valuable data they were able to yield was not used. After several expeditions in which he studied the engravings, Winkler was led

<sup>1</sup> Volume I, *Préhistoire*, published by A. and J. Picard.



to modify the conclusions he first reached in a stimulating work (which he published in Stuttgart in 1937) on the movements of peoples in prehistoric Egypt. In this, according to their clothes and adornments and the weapons they were carrying, the figures engraved on the rocks enabled Winkler to determine five distinct "populating waves". One of these peoples can be characterized by their use of boats which they decorated with banners: they must therefore have come from over the seas; another by the genital sheath which was the only article of clothing they wore and is still to be seen in Africa; another by the feathers in their hair; another by curious head-dress which can now be found among the Ababde and the Bisharins; and the last by a feature of their art: they showed the upper part of the human body as wedge-shaped.

Where did they come from? The feathered men had come over the Red Sea from Asia. The Ababde-like people and the men with the bannered boats were Nagadians, and the "wedge artists" and the people who wore the genital sheath must have been of African origin. Winkler was moved to modify his views by discoveries he made in 1938 and 1939. His final classification gives the sequence which we shall show below in chronological order; this must necessarily be relative as there are no absolute dates to which it can be referred. As we observed before, Sir Flinders Petrie had distinguished the different periods of prehistoric and protohistoric Egypt in this way by establishing sequence-dates which determined the order of events without dating them specifically. An example will show how two sequence-dates can be said to be contemporary: the white-designed vases of Nagada, which occupy level 30 in Sir Flinders Petrie's relative dating, correspond with Winkler's period 3. We should add that Winkler's sequence periods are based on the patina of rock engravings.

According to Winkler, the peoples represented in the petroglyphs occupied Egypt, in the main, over fairly long periods; the "migrant invaders" whose stay was temporary may nonetheless have remained for hundreds if not thousands of years. He determines the order of their coming as follows. At the beginning there were "the Earliest Hunters" who inhabited Egypt when the Nile valley—now a waste land—was still roamed by giraffe and elephant. These hunters were the earliest inhabitants of the desert; they probably came from the west, forced to leave by the drought which struck the Sahara earlier than the Nile valley. They were the kin of the men we met previously at Hoggar and their art is clearly related to that of Upper Mertutek.

They were followed into the desert by the "Early Oasis-Dwellers", whose tools, as well as their paintings, have been found at the oasis

of Dakhla. Perhaps they were of Mediterranean origin. They knew weaving, farming and cattle-breeding, and had reached a more advanced level of civilization than the hunters whom they succeeded. The rock engravings of the Oasis-Dwellers feature the figures of pregnant women, in whom Winkler sees images of the goddess of fertility.

The third group of "Autochthonous Mountain-Dwellers" wore the genital sheath. They were the people shown as wedge-shaped who wore a head-dress like that of the Bisharins and Ababde, their direct descendants; the heirs also of the desert hunters whom the Romans and Greeks called Blemyans, and who were to assume weird and fanciful forms among the monsters of the Middle Ages. The people of the bannered-boats did not live in the desert; J. Vandier tells us "they were satisfied to spend frequent periods in it, during which they carved on rock walls the drawings by which we know them and which show the features of their style".<sup>1</sup> Then came the "Eastern Invaders", the men with the feathered head-dress, Asiatics who came over the Red Sea to Africa in boats with vertical prow and stern. A red potsherd with a white design of the so-called Nagada period was found, and this depicted a type of boat common in Asia, very rare in the Nile valley, and featured in petroglyphs. This was quite unlike the boats used by the "migrants" whom Winkler calls the "Early Nile Valley Dwellers".<sup>2</sup>

The art of these first inhabitants of Egypt is as varied as their origins. With vivid naturalism the earliest hunters reproduced and sometimes—perhaps for ritual purposes—distorted their favourite game, cervidae, bovidae, elephant, giraffe, as well as other unrecognizable or indescribable objects. As we might expect with a hunting people, their art is pre-eminently animalist; so it was in palaeolithic Europe until the advent of farming. With a sense of harmony and the fantastic which calls Paul Klee or even Picasso to mind, the early Oasis-Dwellers did outline drawings of women, solemn and unearthly like divine spirits, dressed in strange, striped dresses; they were probably the first mother-goddesses that man—perennially captivated by the Female Giver of Life—had ever worshipped or portrayed. They have their equivalent in the "Venuses" of prehistoric Europe. The warriors with the feathers in their hair and the tailed loin-cloth, as depicted by the "Earliest Dwellers", have the savage grandeur of conquerors, the fearless

<sup>1</sup> *Manuel d'Archéologie égyptienne*, Tome 1, *Les Périodes de formation*, vol. 1, *La Préhistoire*, published by A. and J. Picard, Paris, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Winkler, *Völker und Völkerbewegungen im vorgeschichtlichen Oberägypten im Lichte Felsbildserfunden*, Stuttgart, 1937. *Rock-drawings of Southern Upper Egypt*, London, 1938 and 1939.



Fig. 19 Graffiti of the 'Autochthonous Mountain-dwellers'

nobility of the modern Shilluk of the Upper Nile. Finally, the pictures of their shipping, the oared boats of the "Earliest Dwellers", or the *Drakkar* of the "Eastern Invaders", curiously like the ships of the Vikings, are fascinating for the light they throw on sea travel in prehistoric Egypt, and for the curious figures of the seamen who appear with them. All this early Egyptian art, so prolific and so stimulating for the student of beauty, paved the way for the flowering of the predynastic periods, the "funeral seascapes" of the tomb of Hierakonpolis, and the ship vases of Nagada. It enables us to see something of the life of the very different peoples who followed one another or lived side by side, and whose contrasts emerge so vividly in the petroglyphs which are all they left to show that they had passed.

It is difficult to use the words "civilization or "culture" in referring to the period of Egyptian history which corresponds with the palaeolithic age, but with the neolithic, at Merimde Beni Salame in the Delta, at El Omari in the neighbourhood of Helwan, and in Fayum, we see the remains of dwellings which are the evidence of a permanent settlement. The men of this period had long known how to grow corn and barley, for the cereals they ate were quite unlike the wild species and very much like those we know today. They

buried their dead in the village itself (at El Omari and Merimde), and on the latter site were found the bones of huge hippopotami, thrust upright into the soil according to a religious or funerary custom which suggests some conception of things sacred and of an afterlife. The Tasians, who lived on the fringe of the Arabian desert at Deir Tasa in the area of Mostagedda, observed a funeral rite which was still more complicated. They buried their dead outside the village in rectangular or oval graves, and in a bent posture; the body rested on its left side, the head placed towards the south and the face turned towards the west. The corpses were wrapped in a cloth or skin shroud and covered with matting.

Hunters as well as farmers, the people of Merimde and Fayum stalked hippopotami, which were common in the marshland of the Nile, for their flesh. They knew how to make bone implements, were skilled in polishing their stone tools, and made necklaces and pendants—protective amulets rather than ornaments, like the paint which they also wore. They had domesticated the ox, the dog, the sheep, the goat and the pig.<sup>1</sup>

In 1924, Brunton discovered the Badarian civilization, opening a new era in Egyptology; this made it possible to study what had hitherto been called prehistory, though depriving it of none of its enigmatic quality, as accurately as history; we should add that if Brunton thought he had reached the very depths when he discovered the Badari culture, his new research on the site of Tasa brought him into contact with a culture which was very much older. Here we come into the unknown territory of sequence-dates prior to s.d. 30, leading to the threshold of the predynastic period, which roughly covered the two thousand years before the advent of the first dynasty; this, according to the generally accepted chronology, was towards 3400 B.C. This means that we have to go back at least 6,000 years before Christ in order to approach Badarian civilization.

In their *The Badarian Civilization*,<sup>2</sup> Mr. Brunton and Miss Caton-Thompson published a very valuable study of the culture. It is important to read this book for an insight into this remarkable period, but we feel nonetheless that it would be advantageous to summarize what Mr. Brunton's work on the Badarians has revealed. As civilizations even earlier than Badari's have since been discovered, it is convenient to go back to the very beginnings (or what, with our knowledge as it stands at the moment we take to be the beginnings) and study the primordial cultures of Tasa, the Fayum and

<sup>1</sup> The most up-to-date report of progress on prehistoric Egypt is contained in the book by H. Alimen, *La Préhistoire de l'Afrique*, published by N. Boubée et Cie., Paris, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1928.

Merimde. They do not really belong to prehistory, in whose palaeolithic age the peoples we see are hunters, for they show the first signs of real civilization by remaining sedentary, by crafts, and, to some extent, by their art. As in all spheres of archaeology, it is pottery which enables us to differentiate the various civilizations. Funerary arrangements and burial procedure also provide some very valuable information.

The Tasians were so called because it was at Deir Tasa, on the eastern bank of the Nile, in middle Egypt, that their remains were found; they were a farming people though they retained certain features of nomad life, especially hunting and fishing. They made polished stone axes, using them to chop down trees, which were plentiful at this time in an area still marshy. Their pottery was made of a coarse material, fired unevenly and blackened on the inside as though it had been exposed to smoke; the shapes of the vessels and the incised strokes, filled with white clay, of their designs suggest certain basketry models, whilst others were undoubtedly clay copies of leather originals.

The pottery of the inhabitants of the Fayum, whose civilization was in many ways similar to that of the Tasians, shows the same characteristics. Above all else, the Fayum people were farmers; they grew barley and spelt which they reaped with sickles made of flint flakes mounted in a wooden haft, rather like an animal jaw with teeth (and the jaw probably provided the original). Like the Tasians they wore necklaces of shells and bone or ivory beads, and they painted their faces—as the alabaster paint dishes in their graves attest.

The inhabitants of Merimde grew corn which they stored in carefully built silos. Their vessels were black, like those of Tasa, but in type they were sometimes like Tasa's and sometimes like the Fayum's. They show evidence of a certain progress, however, since, among them, we find double communicant vessels, bowls with ears and basins with handles. Whilst the Fayum people covered themselves with skins, the Merimilians, like the Tasians, knew the art of weaving.

Their burial procedure differed. At Tasa the body lies in a wide pit in a contracted posture; the graves were outside their villages. At Merimde, on the other hand, the grave was in the midst of the dwellings and contained no food vessels. Junker<sup>1</sup> suggests that since the dead were buried in the midst of the dwellings, and not in actual burial grounds, offerings of this kind were unnecessary; the spirits of the dead could receive their food from their kinsmen.

<sup>1</sup> See Gordon Childe's *New Light on the Most Ancient East*, published by Routledge and Kegan Paul. Rewritten 1952.

No graves were found at the Faiyum, either among the dwellings or outside the villages.

The encroachment of sand and the destruction of culture which it entailed, brought an end to these early civilizations. The desert soon took possession of their dwellings and altered the conditions of their life.

The Badarians were settled in middle Egypt, round the site of Badari which gave them their name. There is evidence that they were unwilling to yield to the drying up of their land without a struggle, for they were farmers and cattle-breeders rather than hunters or fishermen. They do not appear to have belonged to the same race as the Tasians, who, judging from the skeletons found in their graves, were bigger than the Badarians and had differently shaped heads. The variety of objects found in their settlements shows that they were traders and therefore water-travellers as well. Their pottery shows the signs of a considerable advance. "The pottery vessels", writes Gordon Childe,<sup>1</sup> "especially those designed for funerary use, exhibit a perfection of technique never excelled in the Nile Valley. The finer ware is extremely thin, and is decorated all over by burnishing before firing, perhaps with a blunt-toothed comb, to produce an exquisite rippled effect that must be seen to be appreciated. The vases, sometimes coated with a ferruginous wash, were often fired inverted so that the lower part was exposed to the free air and became coloured brown or red by oxidization, whilst the rim and the inside were blackened by impregnation with carbon and smoke and by its deoxidizing effect, the ferric oxide in this case reduced to ferrous. The chief shapes manufactured in this fabric were bowls, often steep sided and sometimes carinated. A globular flask of pinkish buff ware with four handles on the belly is quite exceptional and may be of later date."

The Badarian's art was quite advanced if we are to judge from the pottery, and above all from the ivory statuettes and the amulets often found in their graves. The material conditions in which they lived were still quite simple; they were content with huts of straw matting and wore skins, but their ornaments already reveal a sense of decorative taste. They wore mother-of-pearl, ivory, copper and rock-crystal jewels, and tall combs, carved from ivory in the shapes of animals. They used elegant ivory spoons and had already adopted the custom of burying the corpse with images which were either guardian spirits or *ushabtis* intended to wait on the dead in the next world. It is also thought that they tattooed their bodies; they painted their faces with malachite, especially round the eyes; we must not forget, indeed, that for these early peoples, make-up was not only

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*

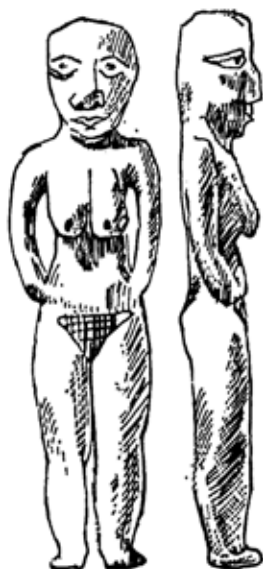


Fig. 20 *Badarian female statuette in ivory*

important for magical or ornamental purposes but for protection from certain infections. It may well be that malachite, brought from Sinai or Nubia, was a remedy for inflammation of the eyes as well as an adornment.

The civilization following that of the Badarians is called Amratian after the site of El Amrah where the most important remains were discovered. This change of culture was quite a radical one, and it was evidently accompanied by racial variations which occur in the skeletons of the Amratians. From certain ivory funerary statuettes, it would seem that the Amratians, in whom the Libyan element was dominant, were straight-nosed, with high foreheads and long beards; according to Petrie,<sup>1</sup> the negroid types sometimes represented were probably the descendants of a race reduced to slavery by the new masters: their type, in fact, occurs mostly in the images of servants, which were substituted, as customs grew gentler, for the victims of funerary sacrifice, and assumed the rôle of the true *ushabti*.

No Amratian cities have been discovered so far, but the importance this people attached to their tombs points to a considerable advance. Whilst the Badarians were buried simply in trenches covered with matting, the Amratians lie in oval pits surrounded by an abundance of funerary equipment including ivory statuettes, some of which are vividly realistic.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Flinders Petrie, *Prehistoric Egypt*, London, 1920.

To promote their import trade, the Amratians built boats with bundles of papyrus, but it is still uncertain whether they knew the use of the sail; in the illustrations on their vases, ships with sails are always those of alien peoples.

Whilst the general standard of their way of life seems higher than that enjoyed by the Badarians, their pottery did not progress correspondingly. "Several classes of pottery, all inferior to the best Badarian, were now in use," says Gordon Childe.<sup>1</sup> "The commonest fabric, termed Black-topped Ware, resembles the finer Badarian in the manner of its decoration by partial oxidization of the ferruginous wash but lacks the tasteful ripple burnish and the fineness of the latter fabric. Among the shapes the flasks, carinated bowls, goblets on a low pedestal and twin vases are noticeable, but the lank tumblers are the most distinctive. Secondly, a polished red ware, fired wholly in an oxidizing atmosphere, was current as was a black ware produced by reduction and imitating basalt. Yet more characteristic is white cross-lined pottery that was only manufactured between A.D. 31 and 35. It is essentially a red ware ornamented with patterns in dull white paint. The designs belong to two series. First there are vases adorned with simple rectilinear motifs evidently copied, like the vases they adorn, from basketry originals. Others are ornamented with the representations of men and animals, already referred to as of magic purport and evidently intended to be lifelike, but the result was not always very successful. These painted scenes have ruder precursors scratched on red-polished or black-topped vases. In some cases plastically modelled animals—generally elephants or hippopotami—walk around the vase's rim. These figures and the painted giraffes, Barbary sheep, and scorpions give us a lively picture of the prehistoric fauna of the Nile valley and its immediate borders. A pendant to the white cross-lined is the rare black incised ware, a fabric principally found in Nubia. It corresponds in technique to the Tasian beakers and like them is inspired by basketry models with the exception of some Nubian vases that imitate a gourd in a straw sling."

The latter type gave rise to an ample variety of models which exhibit greater breadth of imagination than the white pottery. The imitation of basketry, which was originally nothing more than the reproduction of the baskets in which the vessels were carried—like *fiaschi* in Italy—became an independent element of decoration in its own right which lent itself to numerous combinations. Animal designs, on the other hand, are curiously reminiscent of certain petroglyphs, similar to those found by Frobenius in Fezzan, Libya and Orania, and which are scattered throughout Africa from

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*



Rhodesia to the Mediterranean. The problem of animal and human representations in African rock painting and sculpture is too complicated for a superficial attempt to solve it. In any case, the information we have so far and the fact that similar representations have been found in China, India and America, do not yet permit us to reach any conclusions. We should observe in passing that some of the figures on Amratian vases display many affinities of style with the petroglyphs of the Sahara, just as the drawings on Nagada vases and the large mural composition in the famous tomb of Hierakonpolis have more than one feature in common with the ancient paintings of the Bushmen in the Transvaal and South Africa. It would still be too risky to conclude from this either that there was cultural unity or reciprocal influences. We must therefore be satisfied to register these similarities and hope that subsequent discoveries will enable us to recognize the links in space and time which bind them to one another.

Whilst African and Asiatic elements vied with one another in the cultures of Badari and Amrah, the Gerzean civilization which succeeded them was clearly Asiatic. The gulf is now even wider than it was between Badari and Amrah, as much in the necessities of life as in funerary procedure and what we have been able to deduce concerning the ideas, tastes and cults of the new civilization. During this period in fact, sometimes referred to as "old predynastic", we find all the elements by which dynastic Egypt was later to be actuated. The great store they set in funeral rites by the preservation of the body, the provision of funerary equipment and the decoration of graves, attests that the Gerzeans were already concerned with the survival of the soul, and by their representation of objects and living things they were endeavouring to ensure that life for the dead in the next world would, as far as possible, be like the life they had known in this one.

The ancient totemic emblems, which were later to become religious images and the insignia of power, were already beginning to differentiate the various clans. Social life created States possessing quite complicated political systems based on differences of class and condition, and these, with the development of wealth, were to give rise to progress in industry and art. This was due, not only to evolution properly so-called, but to the introduction of a new ideology which brought with it a body of new forms.

Houses, due allowances being made, were already much as they were to be in dynastic Egypt; there is a greater difference between the round shanty of the Merimadians or the hut of the Tasians and this spacious earth dwelling with a door which would satisfy many modern fellaheen. The house of the beyond, the tomb, displays

parallel progress in its increasing complexity; the simple pit grew into a real dwelling-place with all the features and the outline of the *mastaba* as it was to be. The tomb of Hierakonpolis, which belongs to the end of the Gerzean period, in this respect, represents the type of the Egyptian tomb, with its substitution paintings, and its aesthetic interest matches the valuable information it imparts on the magical beliefs of the period. It is apparent that these representations were not dictated by an artistic whim; the hunting, feasting, dancing and sailing scene must in fact have served to enable the dead to find in the next world everything they had loved in this one. Though these primitive frescoes may seem far removed from the magnificent bas-reliefs of Saqqara and the paintings of the Valley of the Kings, they were undoubtedly their direct precursors.

Gerzean pottery is historically very important because it provided Sir Flinders Petrie with the basis for determining sequence-dates through the study of the wavy-rimmed jar; the wavy rim first served as a handle and subsequently became a mere ornament. It was by showing the various stages through which it passed, degenerating from a functional to a decorative purpose, that Petrie was able to demonstrate his famous theory.<sup>1</sup> The old forms persisted in the black and red pottery. The white pottery with the basketry decoration disappeared, as did the vases shaped like leather containers. A new element for imitation had appeared; the Gerzeans no longer copied basketry or leatherwork but stone vases, and they did this so well that they could reproduce their forms and even their decorations in pottery. The potter strived to impart the substance of stone to his work, endeavouring to reproduce its texture with flecks and speckles, so that it would be almost impossible to recognize the difference. Apart from this, the disappearance of geometric designs, which originated in the weave of baskets, was compensated by fresh inspiration in representational art. The realism of the human and animal themes on Badarian vases, their naturalism, sometimes naïve or clumsy but full of life and objective sincerity, was replaced by sombre and almost hieratical stylization. An assertion of style, corresponding with a change in thought, replaced the magical sensitivity of the Badarians. Concrete reproduction yielded to representation distilled through a religious idea.

Magic and religion were still closely associated in Gerzean society, but religion began to take the upper hand. The dog, for example, was no longer buried with his master; the objects buried with the dead were sometimes broken, and as in all other instances where a similar practice has been observed, controversy has arisen. Some, indeed, claim that the custom of burying the dead with part of their

<sup>1</sup> Sir Flinders Petrie, *Prehistoric Egypt*, London, 1920.

possessions, in the same way that the dead in Greece had coins placed in their mouths, had both an allegorical and practical significance. This enabled them to understand that they had been given everything they needed, and their heirs were secured from the covetous desire of their ghosts, whom, it was thought, coins would appease. The breaking of objects was intended to signify that the living renounced all claim to them, that they were given unreservedly and with no thought for taking them back since they could no longer be used. Another, equally valid theory interprets this act as an imitation of death: as objects were dashed to pieces this was their death and they were now ready for the dead to use them; they would probably not have had the same value in the next world if they were left intact. Finally, perhaps by assimilation with human sacrifice, funerary objects were shattered in the same way that it had been the custom to kill slaves and animals.

Clearly, the discovery of the predynastic civilizations has enriched the scope of Egyptology; as well as completely new data, it has yielded new parallels in prehistoric culture and new lessons on which we can draw in our study of dynastic Egypt. This phase, especially in its beginnings, is still very imperfectly known, though for more than a century scholars of many countries have been shifting the sand under which the cities and temples of the pharaohs lie buried. It is only recently that the considerable importance of a culture like that of Tell el Amarna has been recognized, and excavations outside Egypt, in Syria and Mesopotamia, have given us a better insight into the relations which existed with those countries from proto-dynastic times. It can be now quite emphatically asserted that Mesopotamia had immense influence on the arts and skills of the first dynasties. Invasions and trade relations brought with them the introduction of forms and themes. It has even been thought that Elamites or Sumerians brought their civilization into early Egypt, and evidence for this has been found in religious beliefs and funerary procedure, and even in hieroglyphic writing which may have derived from a Babylonian original.

At all events, our present knowledge of Egypt is based not only on discoveries made in its own soil but on parallels which it has been possible to draw with neighbouring civilizations. We must restrict ourselves to an outline of the most important of the discoveries without in any way claiming to exhaust such an inexhaustible subject.

At Giza, which as early as the Egyptian campaign occasioned a famous proclamation by General Bonaparte, and where the pyramids have never ceased to stimulate the interest of tourists and scholars alike, there have been discoveries, some of which have led

to change in traditionally held opinions and enriched our knowledge of Egypt's past. It is the site of the necropolis of the Great Pyramid, where Professor Hermann Junker, leading the expedition of the Academy of Vienna, discovered, south of the pyramid of Cheops, in a cemetery dating from the time of Mycerinus, the mastaba of Seshemnefer and his sons, a body of buildings among which there are colonnades, paved courtyards and libation basins. The importance of this monument lies in the discovery of features previously unknown in the process of its building and decoration, and in the magnificent statues of Seshemnefer, which deserve to be included among the sculptural masterpieces of the archaic period. In 1930, excavations carried out by the Egyptian University of Cairo cleared the tomb of Mersu-Ankh, steward of the estates of Ra-our, and that of the High Priest Ra-our himself, one of the most beautiful of the fifth dynasty, which contained a large number of statues. In the same region, excavations carried out by G. A. Reisner for the Universities of Harvard and Boston revealed an unknown aspect of Egyptian art of the fourth dynasty. The results of these discoveries were examined by Mr. Reisner in his remarkable work, *The Temples of the Third Pyramid at Giza*.<sup>1</sup> The temple of Mycerinus and the neighbouring buildings, the so-called little temples of the queen, yielded some very valuable information.

In April 1936, Professor Selim Hassan, in the neighbourhood of the second pyramid, cleared a whole cemetery which was hitherto unknown; it contained, among others, the tombs of Nefer Hetep and Seshemnefer. These were extremely important for their funeral equipment and for the discovery of a mummy, thought to be that of Seshemnefer's wife. This is the earliest example of a mummy, for it was previously thought unlikely that embalming was practised during the period to which it belongs. The tomb of Khnum-Ba-ef (it is referred to as "the mysterious" because of the time taken to find the entrance which, contrary to custom, was situated in the north) contained the remains of the son of Chephren. Perhaps his reason for this unusual arrangement was to bewilder thieves, or, as Professor Hassan suggests, so that he might be immediately united with the immortal stars of the north, to which, like his father, he showed special devotion.

It was again at Giza, a truly inexhaustible site, that one of the most spectacular and perhaps important discoveries of recent years, "the Ship of Cheops", was made. The discovery was again a matter of chance (by which archaeologists appear to be favoured) in circumstances which are described by M. Abdel Moneim Abubakr, director of excavations at the necropolis of Giza, where he has been

<sup>1</sup> Harvard University Press, 1931.

working since 1949 in conjunction with the University of Alexandria.

"M. Zaki Nour, curator of the necropolis of Giza, was engaged in removing huge mounds of sand and spoil earth south of the Great Pyramid when he found a row of large slabs of limestone, eighty-three in number, stretching from east to west under a small, roughly built wall. These slabs covered the two hollows containing the boats. Ever since that time, one constantly hears of new theories about these boats. Frankly I must confess that with fourteen of the slabs which form the roof of the vault cleared so far, one cannot say with any certainty what the purpose of the boat can have been. Is it a solar bark, or a royal vessel which was actually used by the king on his pilgrimages to the various sacred cities of Egypt? Is it a funerary vessel used to convey the mummy of the king or his funerary equipment to the necropolis on the day of his burial?"<sup>1</sup>

This is not the first time that sacred ships have been found in hollows specially made for them and which are consequently more like shrines than containers. Three hollows for boats were already known to be situated near the Great Pyramid; with the two new ones there are five boats for Cheops—the same number as the pyramid of Chephren; as for the third pyramid of king Menkawre, commonly known as Mycerinus, it has never been fully excavated and we do not know whether it also had ships. None have been found in the pyramid of Seneferu (Cheops' father) at Dahshur. It might be possible to base a theory for the purpose of the boats on their orientation and its symbolic meaning but it has been found that they face different directions: those of the Great Pyramid extend from north to south, and those of Chephren's pyramid from east to west.

One can well imagine the excitement which the archaeologists must have felt when once a hole had been made in one of the slabs, which weigh 20 tons, and a photographic survey revealed the presence of a boat in the long hollow which they covered. The photographic survey, which does valuable work by indicating whether an underground structure is worth excavating, has been very successfully used for a number of years, especially in Italy, in the identification and preliminary study of Etruscan tombs.

"I saw the deck of a ship which was in very good condition", writes Kamal el Malakh, the director of operations in the area of the pyramids. "On the 26th May, at noon and in scorching heat, I excitedly looked inside to examine the wood. At first I could make nothing out because of the contrast between the blinding light outside and the darkness within. As I closed my eyes to compose

<sup>1</sup> *La Revue du Caire*, vol. xxxiii, no. 175, 1955.

myself and get ready to look again, I became vaguely aware of a kind of scent. Then I smiled. It was the smell of a curious compound, five thousand years old. To me it was the smell of time. I was now certain that the wood was still there. Having two mirrors fetched to reflect the light of the sun—the god of the Egyptians—through the hole into the inside, I was able to distinguish the ship and its rudder. We know today that the wood was cedar from Lebanon. Wooden joints connected the different parts of the deck; one could see wooden pins and joints. I also noticed a little copper joint, and what was more, it was possible to distinguish a fabric covering certain parts of the wood.”<sup>1</sup>

For their ordinary ships the Egyptians normally used local woods, acacia and sycamore, but for the holy ships which were perhaps to go on the voyage into the afterlife, from Syria they fetched ach wood, which came from the fir tree, and uan and meru, which may have come from the cedar. Modern Egypt's political conditions and her present relations with European states make research by French scholars more difficult than it was in the past. Pierre Montet, the famous Egyptologist, to whom, among other things, we are indebted for the extremely important excavations at Tanis, was able to examine the boat some time after it was discovered, and in a very interesting study<sup>2</sup> he declares that the planks of the deck appeared to him to be of fir and the hull of cedar, as verified by Zaki Iksandar, chief chemist of the Cairo Museum, with his first analysis. Later, in another hollow about four metres from the first, another boat was found. Apart from red marks left by quarrymen on the slabs, and a few hundred metres of rope, nothing but the equipment of the ship was found. This was a great disappointment to the general public which is always inclined to imagine that sensational discoveries in Egypt must inevitably be accompanied by fabulous treasures like those contained in the tomb of Tutankhamen. This discovery was a supremely important one, nonetheless, and of great scientific value.

What is especially interesting about this discovery? First of all, the character of the boat itself, which made it possible to analyse the ship-building techniques of the ancient Egyptians; then the more complicated study—for here we are on more delicate ground—of the nature and purpose of the ship. “A whole ship of comparable size or age (dating back to about 2700 B.C.) had never appeared before during excavations in Egypt, and the state of preservation in which it seems to have come down to us is truly astonishing,” declared Jean-Philippe Lauer. In its size it surpasses the ships already

<sup>1</sup> *Les Grandes Découvertes archéologiques en 1954*, Cairo, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> *La Barque de Cheops*, *Revue de Paris*, February, 1956.

known: that of the mastaba of Ah-a at Saqqara, which is 19 metres long, the five ships of the pyramid of Chephren (or Kefren), that of the "fourth" pyramid, that of Queen Khentikaues, or that discovered by Chassinat at Abu Roash. "It is a unique and important example of ship-building in the twenty-seventh century B.C.", wrote Canon Drioton. "This is already sufficient to place it among the truly revealing discoveries which have so far been made on Egyptian soil."

As basic conclusions, those of Pierre Montet concerning the structure of the ship itself, and the fact that it was dismantled before being placed in the hollow and then reassembled inside it, are the ones which appear most worthy of being retained. It seems to me that it would have been easy to make the hollow large enough for the size of the ship but this was not done, and "because its accommodation was too narrow, or perhaps for some other reason, it was thought sufficient to place its various parts side by side without assembling them, and to hold them in position with struts and props. One can see round or square holes in the thickness of the planks and a number of evenly spaced rectangular ones on their surface. Quite some time ago, in the first dynasty tombs situated north of Giza, I myself found some wooden coffins, the boards of which were literally sewn together with cord which passed through a great number of holes, and some others in which the planks were held together by mortise and tenon joints. The Egyptian carpenters who built ships worked in exactly the same way as the joiners who made chests and coffins." The prow and stern were each decorated with a stem-post carved in the shape of a lotus, the sacred plant of Egypt with the papyrus. It was the stem-posts which were unfastened and removed before the ship was brought into position in the hollow, and then placed beside it. Why? It has been suggested that when everything had been done, the boat was seen to be too long for its container through an oversight of the director of the operation. This seems highly unlikely, for in a country like Egypt, where tradition, rite and symbol governed every step taken in the life of the kings—and especially in their afterlife—negligence of this kind is quite inconceivable.

In comparing Cheops' ship with those found in Scandinavian tombs dating from the Viking period, there is a theory which I should like to take the liberty of suggesting. Unlike the Egyptian ships, those found in Danish or Norwegian tumuli contained the remains of the dead man, a glorious warrior and bold seafarer, as well as his favourite animals and most prized possessions. When the famous ships of Gokstad and Oseberg were cleared from the mass of stones and earth which covered them, it was observed with

surprise that they were attached by a heavy rope to a huge rock, as though, even with an artificial hill to cover it, the drakkar, disturbed by the wandering spirit, would have been able to carry off into space its cargo of skeletons and sledges carved with dragons' heads. Perhaps the Egyptians of the early dynasties believed that the royal ships buried near the pyramids contained wandering spirits who could make them put to sea if the stern-posts were not removed: this would make it impossible for them to set sail.

What part could such a ship have played during its lifetime, and what real or symbolic value could it have had in the afterlife? From M. Pierre Montet, who was allowed to examine and photograph the vessel but not to measure or touch it, we know that it had a deck, that it was propelled by oarsmen, and that it did not have a sail or mast. "This is an important point which proves that the ship was not intended for long voyages, for on all craft going up the Nile the mast was raised and the sail was trimmed to catch the north wind. Going in the other direction, the sail was rolled up and the mast was dismantled and laid on the deck, or rather, placed on forked posts." That is how ships are often represented in bas-reliefs and funerary paintings, resembling in all respects the vessel—or vessels, for it is very likely that another exists—found near the Great Pyramid.

Many tales have been told about this vessel. Some have said that it contained fabulous treasures, that a secret passage linked the trench in which it was enclosed and the funerary chamber inside the pyramid; and there was talk of gold statues and a curse. . . . Where poison was concerned, only the faint smell of cedar resin could be detected when the hollow was opened. There was nothing in the "ship's grave" apart from the vessel itself, oars, the rudder, ropes, and some pieces of matting. Mystery and treasure enthusiasts will be disappointed but not scholars, for the importance of a discovery like this one lies in the many problems it raises, and the essential one is whether the ship was actually used or merely symbolic.

Of course it is very difficult to answer this question for the Egyptians represented the dead voyaging through the afterlife in a craft like the one used by the sun in its nightly journey through the world of shades to rebirth in the morning. When we read the hypotheses advanced by Egyptian and foreign Egyptologists we find that there are conflicting opinions. Some speak of a symbolic solar-bark whilst others hold to the theory of a funerary vessel. Once again, two mutually exclusive points of view, symbolic and realist, keenly contend with one another. The conclusions reached by Pierre Montet, a scholar specially qualified to give a balanced



judgment, therefore deserves to be borne in mind. The discoverer of Tanis holds that it would be wrong to look on Cheops' ship and the hypothetical second ship (thought to be adjacent to it but not yet found) as the vessels of the sun, the *manjit* on which it sailed during the day, and the *masketit* which served it for its voyage through the night.

"It is generally accepted," he writes,<sup>1</sup> "that the air-dried brick model of a ship, found in rather poor condition by German archaeologists near the obelisk of the sun at Abu Gurab, about fifteen kilometres south of Giza, represents the ship waiting to take the sun on its journey through the night to bring light to the lower world. The two boat-shaped pits on either side of the funerary temple of Cheops could be models of the solar-barks, but we have to find quite a different reason for the boat which concerns us. Scenes with ships appear in the *mastabas* of the Old Kingdom, in the tombs of Ti, Merruka and many others. The dead man had still to visit his lands in the south and north which were to continue providing for him. Or else he was going on a pilgrimage to one of the holy cities of Egypt. It was often held sufficient to show that Amentit, the land of the dead, was the goal which the lord of the tomb had set himself. But we have seen that Cheops' ship was not constructed or rigged for a long voyage, for it has neither a mast nor a sail and only a small number of oars. There could thus be no question of a voyage of the sun or a journey of any distance. We are consequently led to a more prosaic explanation. The ship and its companion probably served no other object than to convey the king's gilded sarcophagus and his funerary goods to the temple in the valley. Perhaps Dedefra, Cheops' son, who organized the Pharaoh's burial, decided that a ship which had fulfilled such a noble purpose should not be used again and that it was therefore to be taken to pieces and buried as near the pyramid as possible."

There is also a very interesting observation by Mme. Christian Desroches Noblecourt, curator of the Egyptian Department at the Louvre, which deserves to be recalled. "A construction of the kind", she writes, "would encourage us to think that once again, Herodotus (*Euterpe* 124) was not deceiving us when, after immersing himself in the legends still current at the time of his visit to the pyramids, he reported that Cheops' monument had an underground funerary chamber which had been conceived as an island surrounded by a channel. This funerary chamber exists, and the late conception of the channel might well have been inspired by the ships hidden in the models of underground docks and housed there to suggest a sea voyage by the deceased. This being so, does it not seem likely

<sup>1</sup> *Revue de Paris*, February, 1956.

that the ships were intended to transport the different incarnations of the dead man, now buried deep in the earth, on a long voyage through the underworld? That with four necessary breaks in his journey (we now know that these summarize the prehistoric funeral rites of Buto) he was to make his way through the gloom of these primordial waters to emerge at last at the dawn of his eternal life?" Here, as in all ancient mythology, the idea of resurrection was closely bound up with anything associated with water—especially fish.

Special significance can thus be attributed to the graffiti of fish which are to be found among the drawings left by workmen on the new step pyramid at Saqqara. A reproduction of this fish, the *Tilapia Nilotica*, or Bolti (the ancient Egyptian called it "Inet") accompanies a very interesting article by Mme. Desroches Noblecourt in the *Revue du Caire* (1954). This fish was worshipped in the city of Mendes; it was the very one in whose form the dead man was "reborn". It is also to be seen either accompanying the funerary vessel or carried by it. "In this", says the author of the article, "we have an example hitherto unique of a symbol which recurs in the following dynasties. This allows us to conclude that in all periods, in the reigns of Djoser and his immediate successors of course, and most certainly in the days of Cheops, the dead ruler had to pass through tragic and solitary gestation in the primordial world of water in order to be reborn, triumphantly restored to strength, and revitalized by the breath of life 'for ever and ever'."

In the necropolis at Giza, M. Abdel Moneim Abubakr, who conducted the excavations undertaken by the University of Alexandria, found a wealth of previously unknown tombs belonging to important members of Cheops' court and to priests whose duties related to the burial places of the kings. Of course these had been robbed but the archaeologist still got his share of the plunder; in this instance it consisted of fine bas-reliefs and a dozen portrait-statues which can be included among the masterpieces of the restrained, monumental and vitally realistic sculpture of the early dynasties. And at length, near the mastaba of Per-sen, the discovery was made of a circular, vaulted, brick building, which was equipped with a kind of corridor and a sliding trap-door. What purpose could have been served by this building which was unlike anything found before it? The archaeologists who examined it believe that it may have been the cage of a hyena, for this beast is often represented among domestic animals in funerary bas-reliefs.

If they are right, one may well ask what place a cage of this kind could have in the city of the dead. What was the ritual or symbolic significance attached to it? Why was it kept in the area of the tombs where everything connected with the life of the dead man was

either carved or painted? No doubt this is a minor problem among the great corpus of "unknowns" which confront the archaeologist, but an interesting one nevertheless, for through the hyena it may put us on the track of beliefs relating to the afterlife.

If there is one thing which strikes all amateurs of archaeology and Egyptologists alike, it is the unending wealth of secrets which sites long excavated, like Giza, Karnak or Abydos, continue to yield. A French archaeologist, Serge Saunerson, who took part in the excavations at Tanis, Karnak and Deir el Medinah, recently declared that "on each of these ancient sites, the area rich in monuments of the pharaohs is so huge that the surveys and excavations of the nineteenth century, as well as those in more recent years, have so far been unequal to the task of extracting all their wealth". We do not propose to list all the discoveries which have been made but only to mention the most important ones, those which have served Egyptology by shedding new light and by confirming or invalidating theories which have been maintained.

Saqqara, the great funerary city of pyramids and mastabas, was one of the earliest "dead cities" to be surveyed by scholars—after, as we have good reason to suspect, it had already been visited and plundered by excavators who came unauthorized. However extensively we may have thought that it had been surveyed and identified, Saqqara in recent years has continued to yield monuments as important as the tombs of the early dynasties: the causeway of Unas, the ships of Ah-a, and—most important—the tomb of the pharaoh Uaji in 1953, and that of Ka-a (or one of that king's dignitaries) in 1954; then the very mysterious new step pyramid, which could have been the tomb of Zoser's successor or a "second tomb" of Zoser himself.

The custom of building a second tomb was actually quite a common one, intended either to mislead tomb-robbers or serve as a cenotaph which was venerated as though the pharaoh's mummy were actually inside it. The English Egyptologist, Walter B. Emery, has concluded that "there are good reasons for thinking that it was customary among the early kings to have two tombs, one in the north, the other in the south, in deference to the relatively recent unification of Upper and Lower Egypt under the same rule". Emery thinks that Saqqara was the true necropolis whilst at Abydos there were only cenotaphs—tombs, where corpses were never laid.

The discovery of the tomb of Uaji, the third king of the First Dynasty, confirms this view; it is actually three times as large as his monument at Abydos. The royal tomb was surrounded by a profusion of graves in which there were the bodies of all the members of the king's household; they had been killed when he died, in order that they might continue to serve him in the afterlife. Uaji's tomb

had been stripped of all the precious objects in its funerary equipment, but attributing no value to them, the thieves left some splendid bulls' heads which were modelled in clay and fitted with real horns; they were arranged on a kind of ledge which ran round the monument. It is impossible to conceive of anything as strange or moving as these beasts keeping their watch over the pharaoh in his everlasting sleep.

The tomb of king Ka-a, discovered in 1954, is also twice as large as the Abydos cenotaph. It is of very great interest because it establishes an architectural type for the royal tombs of the early dynasties, and even more so for the remarkably vivid frescoes which it contains. They have a special significance in the history of Egyptian art, for they are the first of their kind; since Ka-a was the last king of the first dynasty this takes us back to about 2800 B.C.

The new step pyramid was uncovered by the Egyptian archaeologist, M. Zakaria Ghoneim, from a mound of bricks, earth and limestone slabs. This covered a wide artificial terrace, situated not far from the pyramids of Unis and Zoser, in a part of Saqqara which had already been surveyed since 1945 by Abdessalam Hussein. The clearance of the debris and the uncovering of the courses of stone and the limestone walls brought to light some interesting jobbing workmen's tallies, drawn in red by the quarrymen. These were curious sketches, and amongst them there were animals, birds, boats, and Libyans armed with bows—the fanciful work of a mason who took his ease in this way after his exertions. It has also been possible to recognize some horizontal lines which were marked out as a guide in the work of cutting the stones. Started in 1952, by 1953 the excavations cleared a pyramid with a side length of 120 metres; with the seven superimposed steps which it should have had it would have reached a height of 70 metres.

According to all the evidence, the pyramid must have been left incomplete; but was it ever used as a resting-place by the pharaoh who had it built? It was to answer this question that M. Zakaria Ghoneim undertook a search for the opening when the outer walls had been cleared. It was found on the 2nd February, 1954; a series of underground passages, open at various points and blocked at others, holes partially filled in, some of which served to ventilate the monument whilst others were to check reckless intruders by causing heavy stone portcullises to fall on them: these were obstacles which the research party encountered. In one of the holes, which was a grave for sacred animals during the Saitic period, the remains were found of oxen, rams, gazelles and dogs, which were wrapped in linen winding-sheets, together with faience amulets, sawn and carved horns, and papyri with demotic inscriptions.

Beneath the hole, in a corridor cut off by a 5 metre barrier of huge blocks of stone, intentionally placed there by the builders of the pyramid to thwart trespassers, some magnificent jewels, which had probably been the property of a wife of the king if not the king himself, were found lying on the bare ground, together with hundreds of diorite or alabaster vases and small conical jars with stoppers bearing the seal of Sekhem-Khet, a ruler hitherto unheard of. It is thought that Sekhem-Khet was not an unknown king, but the Horus-name of Zoser or one of his successors in the third dynasty. Why should Zoser have had two pyramids built for himself? Vladimir Vikentiev, a Russian archaeologist, maintains this view and supports it with the fact that there are two pyramids of Seneferu, the father of Cheops, at Dahshur.

At all events, the unknown king's funerary chamber still remained to be found. At last, 72 metres from the entrance to the pyramid, in the rock mass of which its centre was composed, after gaining the upper hand over numerous obstacles, the archaeologists came to a rectangular chamber, 5 metres high, 9 metres wide and 5 metres deep. In the middle there was a splendid sarcophagus of translucent alabaster, honey-coloured, delicately veined, and more than 2 metres long. There was no funeral equipment about it and yet there was reason to think that the tomb had not been robbed. When examined, the sarcophagus was found to be intact; at the back, where the head of the corpse should be, there were some small decomposed branches of trees. When the coffin was opened by moving a sliding panel (a wholly unusual feature) it was empty.

In the opinion of Zakaria Ghoneim, this was a symbolic coffin which had never been used other than for a symbolic funeral ceremony during the festival of Heb-Sed. It may also have been intended to delude thieves, who would logically look in the central chamber for the remains of the king and his treasures. "Examples of ritual tombs of this kind are known at Saqqara itself, where there is the false burial chamber under Zoser's southern enclosure wall. In the necropolis of Thebes, there is the cenotaph of Neb-hepet-Ra Mentuhetep, in the court of his temple at Deir el Bahri. There an empty wooden sarcophagus was found by Howard Carter in 1900, at the same time as a statue of this king which represents him in the vestments of Heb-Sed. His real tomb is more to the west beneath the cliff." Why was the step pyramid left unfinished? Why did the funerary chamber contain nothing but an empty sarcophagus? Probably because the king who began building it died before it was finished. As for the real burial chamber, it must be somewhere within the enclosure surrounding the pyramid; but where? Perhaps we shall eventually be enlightened by excavations shortly to take

place. According to Hans Stock, a German archaeologist, Sekhem-Khet is buried in the area of the pyramid. . . . "There are two arts which the scholar must practise", says Hermann Kess in commenting on this discovery, "he must know how to wait and not forget."

We know that in their everlasting wars with the Hyksos or the Libyans, the Egyptians were compelled to erect fortress chains which could check the invaders. Ramses II, who was a great strategist, a brave warrior and an indefatigable builder, marked out the desert in this way with fortified strongholds. It happened in 1946 that a peasant was planting figtrees in a tiny desert village 300 kilometres from Alexandria, and in his land he found three stone slabs bearing inscriptions. Fayez Awad quietly notified the appropriate authorities of his discovery and in due course the hamlet of Zawiet Um el Rakkham was visited by Egyptian and English archaeologists. Although the first excavations revealed engraved stones and stellae bearing the name of Ramses II, it was only six years later that M. Labib Habachi found the remains of a stronghold which also included temples decorated with episodes from the wars fought by Ramses against the Libyans.

This important discovery should lead archaeologists to tackle the other strongholds which are already known in the Western Desert, those of Alamein and Gharbaniyat, for example, and those which were stages and relay points in the vast defence system. Despite the abundant diplomatic correspondence which is possessed and the temple bas-reliefs which relate the victorious wars fought against the Hyksos, there is still a great deal to be learned concerning the warlike relationships which existed between this people and the Egyptians. I shall restrict myself to drawing the attention of historians and enthusiasts interested in the Hyksos wars to a very important discovery made at Karnak seven years ago by M. Labib Habachi at the western entrance of the imposing pillared hall, in the foundations of a statue of Ramses II: this is a stele, 2 metres high and very well preserved, which tells of Kamose's victories over the Hyksos of Apopi. By a skilful manoeuvre which prevented Apopi from uniting with the troops of the king of Kush, Kamose succeeded in routing his adversaries, who had taken advantage of a brief period of weakness and decadence in Egypt under the twelfth and thirteenth dynasties to enter the country *en masse*. These Semitic peoples came from Palestine and Syria (it has been claimed that they were Scythians or even Mongols); they adopted Egyptian ways but without gaining the sympathies of the Egyptian people who stubbornly fought to drive out these unwanted invaders. As the new Karnak stele relates, Kamose destroyed a fleet of three hundred ships which were to bring fresh supplies to the enemy, and

then he burnt their strongholds; he sacked the desert cities which supported the Hyksos, either willingly or otherwise, and triumphantly returned to Thebes where great celebrations were held in his honour; following this, his exploits and achievements were recorded in the engravings on the limestone plaque.

Kamose's victory was not decisive and the war still went on for a long time; it was only Ahmosis' tireless determination which brought it to an end, and his triumphal campaign which was concluded with the fall of the Hyksos capital, Avaris, is reported in a document of the very highest order: the funerary inscription of the general Ahmes, engraved in his tomb at El-Kab, not far from Thebes. Ahmes appears as one of the bold, unyielding soldiers who helped to deliver the Two-Kingdoms in the critical days of Egypt's history. Short and remarkably broad-chested, bull-necked, with a small head and low, narrow forehead, Ahmes had the grim obstinacy of a bulldog refusing to loose his hold. When the history of Egypt's liberation under the pharaohs of the seventeenth dynasty is written, a place must be found for the major part played by Kamose, the account of whose triumphal campaigns have just been deciphered on the Karnak stele.

Since we have been speaking of the Hyksos, this is an appropriate moment to remember that our increased knowledge of them over the years is mainly due to the efforts of Pierre Montet and to his excavations on the site of Tanis—the Hyksos' Avaris—built in the Delta as far back as the seventeenth century B.C., as the stele "of the year 400" informs us.

The site of Saqqara, where the finest Egyptian tombs are to be found, has been the centre of renewed research bearing mostly on the tomb of King Djoser of the third dynasty (about 2900 B.C.) in the area of the famous step pyramid. It was there that Cecil Firth found some tombs of the third dynasty which were decorated with blue tiles, bas-reliefs showing the Pharaoh Djoser, and large vases bearing the name of a pharaoh of the second dynasty. In a report which he made to the *Académie des Inscriptions* in May, 1930, M. Moret summarized the discoveries made by the *Service des antiquités de l'Égypte* in the area of the step pyramid: "The clearance of an enclosure embellished with an entry colonnade, of a building for the Sed festival, of two chapels for princesses, of a funerary temple (with a statue) for the king, and of a new vault which is presumed to be funerary, demonstrate the importance of the operations carried out by Mr. Firth, the director, and by M. J.-P. Lauer, the architect. The personalities of Djoser and Imhotep his director of operations become defined: a period previously unknown in Egyptian architecture is revealed through master-

pieces. This is the transition stage between the brick and wood buildings of the first and second dynasties, and the huge block edifices of the fourth dynasty (the great pyramids). Small rocks of fine limestone, cinnamon coloured columns still imbedded, vegetable designs, wooden frameworks imitated in stone: these are the characteristic features of a style which, lacking the right equipment, cannot handle large stones and treats masonry like precision carpentry. Large-scale work is consequently out of the question, but on the other hand there are the qualities of lightness, moderation and sense of proportion which are all the more remarkable in that they occur at the beginning of historical times."<sup>1</sup>

The excavations carried out from 1924 to 1936 by the *Service des Antiquités* under G. Jéquier in the southern part of the necropolis of Memphis were centred on the pyramid of Pepi II, whose funerary temple has emerged as one of the most complete of the period; it has yielded a series of very beautiful bas-reliefs, making it possible to reconstruct the mural decorations.

As a consequence of the reopening of the pyramid, the missing parts of the funerary inscriptions have been restored; this invaluable collection of texts has also been newly increased by the discovery of the pyramids of Queens Neit and Ujebten with their inscription-covered vaults, as well as that of King Aba, one of the successors of Pepi II and previously unknown.

The necropolis contemporary with these pyramids has for the most part been excavated, yielding a very important series of tombs of the "furnace" type peculiar to this period.

The full clearance of Mastabat Fara'un has made it possible to ascribe this monument to Shepseskaf (fourth dynasty).

Other excavations in this neighbourhood have led to the discovery of two large royal tombs of the thirteenth dynasty and of an Aramaean necropolis of the Persian period.

Meidum, situated south of what can be called the pyramid region, has, in the course of further excavations, provided new information on the earliest dynasties. It is one of the best preserved sites, and Mr. Alan Rowe's operations there on behalf of the museum of the University of Pennsylvania have considerably enriched our knowledge of the period of Cheops. It was there, indeed, that Mr. Rowe explored the pyramid of Seneferu, Cheops' father, which, with its little "Queen's" pyramid, its *mastabas*, and its temple, forms one of the most complete funerary complexes of the Old Kingdom. We should add that traces of predynastic occupation have also been found at Meidum, and its main features show affinities with the Fayum culture. From the earliest graves, which

<sup>1</sup> *Revue archéologique*, 1930.



are only holes in the sand, up to the pyramid of Seneferu, it is thus possible to study the entire evolution of funerary technique and its metamorphosis through holes and chambers carved out of rock into great architectural complexes. It would be interesting to know what were the ritual or magical reasons which determined the position of the body; in graves at Meidum prior to the third dynasty, the corpses are in a squatting position, lying on their left side with the head facing south; from the third dynasty they are still squatting, but lying on their right side with the head towards the north. It may be that profound upheavals in religious thought were the cause of these changes.

Mr. Rowe's study of the pyramid itself has definitely established the processes by which it was built; he concludes that the pyramid was built in steps, with each level being superimposed on the one below (there were eight of them), and then the whole was covered with a coating, giving it the appearance we know today.

The great *mastaba*, a neighbour of the pyramid, is also one of the fullest and most characteristic constructions. As though they were drawn only yesterday, it still bears workmen's graffiti relating to the operation—a foreman's notes with instructions for measurements and dates. Written on the ceiling in one of the corridors, one can even see the names of two travellers who visited the pyramid in about 1200 B.C. Like so many modern tourists who have the annoying habit of leaving a record of their visit on monuments, the scribes Amenumosis and Sekerti sought to perpetuate their memory; they have achieved their object. . . .

Although the *mastaba* of Meidum was built for royal functionaries, in the course of centuries it was literally invaded by the bodies of poor people; not having the means to build tombs of their own, they took advantage of this one which was spacious and not too cluttered to receive their wretched remains. It contained no splendid coffins and practically no funerary equipment. Some of the dead, too poor to pay for coffins, were simply wrapped and bound in a piece of matting. The noble owner of the *mastaba*, who had gone to so much trouble to have it built, could never have guessed that so many intruders would come to share his tomb. Let us hope that his rest is not disturbed by them and that he is enjoying all the happiness permitted by the afterlife in the fields of Hialu.

When we compare these hasty collective burials with the magnificent arrangement of certain tombs, and especially, when we recognize how shamelessly thieves raided their funerary treasures at a time when the children of the dead were still alive, we can only wonder whether all Egyptians had the respect for the dead which is sometimes attributed to them. We mentioned before how, in the

tomb of Deir el Bahri, the bearers of the coffin of princess Entiu-ny took advantage of the disorder caused by the interruption of the burial to tear off the gold masks and carry them off. At Meidum something similar happened and proof of this was found in the cemetery discovered by Rowe in 1931. A great complex of brick *mastabas* of the fourth dynasty contains the tombs of prince Ny-hep, and of Rahotep and his wife Nefert, whose statues are held to be among the masterpieces of Egyptian art. Rahotep's tomb was plundered a short time after it was fitted, and the magnificent wooden coffin which it had contained was removed by thieves who probably resold it immediately after the tomb was sealed. They may even have been the workmen who had just carried out the burial. But if the coffin disappeared, we still know what it was like from the imprint which it left in the mud surrounding it. By simply taking a cast from this, panels exactly like the ones which were stolen have been obtained. This cast is unique in character and of considerable archaeological interest; it shows that the coffin represented a house or palace of the Old Kingdom. With its crenellated walls and its gates, it was probably exactly like Rahotep's earthly home, for which he wanted to find an equivalent in the next world. This discovery is a valuable one because it enables us to compare Rahotep's missing coffin with those found by Morgan at Nagada in the *mastabas* of the first dynasty and by Quibell at Saqqara in the *mastaba* of Hesy of the third dynasty.

We shall not leave Meidum without examining the temple of the pyramid, which was connected with it by a splendid causeway. Despite its size and imposing appearance it did not always succeed in maintaining its sacred quality; there is evidence to show that during a period of the Old Kingdom it was used as a dwelling by shepherds or vagabonds who showed little respect for its sanctity. There are also many travellers' graffiti conveying their admiration and pleasure in the trip, often with the oppressive triteness which we associate with modern tourists.

Meidum teaches us a great deal about the art and funerary technique of the early dynasties, but we must return to Saqqara to study the tomb found by Walter B. Emery at the beginning of 1936. This tomb, the earliest we know of in Egyptian history, is that of Hemaka, a dignitary at the court of a little known king of the first dynasty, who reigned in about the year 3500 B.C. The funerary equipment contains flint sacrificial knives, ivory arrows, and a schist dish inlaid with coloured stones which, with striking naturalism, depicts gazelles being chased by dogs. The most curious feature of this tomb is its huge stores which held the provisions necessary to feed a whole town. Among the forty-two rooms serving as store-cupboards there was one in particular, a cellar indeed, in which

there were more than two thousand jars of wine carefully corked with clay stoppers; these probably contained the noble Hemaka's choicest vintages.

This abundant stock furnishes us with a remarkable commentary on Egyptian beliefs relating to the afterlife. The idea that the dead would need food and drink in their next existence had not yet yielded the belief that it was enough to reproduce an object to give it concrete reality. It was later thought sufficient to paint or engrave the wall of the tomb with a well-laden table to ensure that the dead were not lacking in anything; it was in the same spirit that food for the journey, legs of mutton and chickens carefully shut up in boxes, maintained an everlasting quality and possessed the power of endlessly replenishing their stocks. The two thousand jars of wine which Hemaka accumulated in his tomb prove that during this period the dead were thought capable of eating the food. On the other hand it seems likely that, having little confidence in the zeal with which his heirs would observe the food sacrifice, the cautious Hemaka was careful to stock everything he would need in advance.

For the Egyptian dead wanted anything which could be useful to them to be near at hand. Even the static permanence of death could not repress their delight in travel, and in the tomb of Hetepheres, mother of Cheops who built the Great Pyramid, Dr. Reisner found some light and very elegant travelling equipage, made of cedarwood and covered with gold. The bed, the armchairs, and the pillars of a huge tabernacle which formed a portable bedroom are of very great beauty. This is the only equipage of its kind and period (about 3000 B.C.) which we possess, and the perfection which artists and craftsmen were now able to achieve is reflected in the delicacy of their technique and decorative skill. The care with which the individual parts of these furnishings (which could be dismantled) were fitted to one another with copper joints cannot have been surpassed by any workmanship of the last five thousand years.

Thanks to the generosity of Mr. J. Rockefeller, the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, under the direction of Professor J. H. Breasted, was able to undertake a superb series of publications and carry out excavations in Egypt; they obtained the most interesting results at Thebes.<sup>1</sup> Since 1928 operations conducted by Hölscher have cleared the mortuary temple of Ramses II. M. Drioton, in a commentary on this work in the *Revue archéologique* (1933), wrote "The most important discovery in previous campaigns had been the levelling of the walls in a palace of Ramses III, the connection, through a great sculptured bay, with the southern colonnade of the first court of the temple. This palace must also

<sup>1</sup> See U. Hölscher's *Excavations at Ancient Thebes*, Chicago University Press, 1932

have been connected with the famous fortified gateway situated in front of the great pylon and commanding the entrance of the sacred precinct, for the rooms through the gateway are decorated with some attractive bas-reliefs which show Ramses III in his harem. It was on this gateway and its immediate area that operations were carried out. They led to the discovery, about 30 metres in front of it, at the boundary of the cultivated lands, of a quay similar to those of Karnak and Medamud; it was more complete, however, and gave a better idea of the structure of the buildings washed by the waters of a canal running into the Nile. The cubic-shaped moles which had hitherto been alone in holding attention, were nothing more, in fact, than the central portion of an architectural whole, a kind of platform overlooking a port which was itself situated further forward at the level of the water, and accessible by means of two stairways on either side of the mole." M. Drioton then goes on to a study of the fortified gateway, an example of Egyptian architecture which has so far proved unique.

In 1936, the archaeologists of the *Institut français du Caire*, led by M. Jouguet, found the ruins of very extensive mortuary temples; amongst them, four cleared by MM. Robichon and Varille were identified as belonging to important dignitaries at the court of Amenophis III. The discovery was an extremely significant one for it made possible the clearance of a body of buildings dedicated to the memory of the architect Amenhotep, the son of Hapu, who achieved almost legendary glory in the land of the pharaohs and was placed in the ranks of the gods; his fame reached so far that his sayings were even included in the writings of the Seven Sages of Greece.

It was probably through the efforts of the son of Hapu that the architectural revolution defined by Professor Breasted in his *History of Egypt* took place. It was he also who performed the technical miracle of transporting some colossi of Memnon from Heliopolis to Thebes. Amenhotep's genius was thus immortalized with funerary honours previously accorded only to those of royal blood. Even in its size, the sanctuary erected in his memory (his tomb, like the burial-places of the kings, was in a mountain pass) eclipses the neighbouring royal tombs; that of Tuthmosis II, for example, is only 17 metres long and 12 wide, whilst Amenhotep's temple is 110 metres long and 45 metres wide. "Furthermore," write Robichon and Varille, "the plan of this gigantic temple is most curious. Passing through the first pylon, one entered a garden with a central basin surrounded by trees. Three balustrades led to a terrace with a colonnade. Then one came to the second pylon and this led into a large court surrounded by peristyles, under which were light vaulted chapels

adorned with mural paintings. . . . Finally the visitor reached a large hall, covered by one of the biggest vaulted roofs in Egypt."<sup>1</sup>

At Armant (ancient Hermonthis), near Luxor, an English expedition led by R. Mond, W. B. Emery and Seton Lloyd discovered the necropolis of the sacred bulls, similar to the Serapeum of Saqqara, with limestone sarcophagi, the remains of wooden coffins, and the mummies of eighteen bulls. A large number of altars and sacrificial tables fashioned in the shape of the sacred basin to which the divine creature came to drink, perpetuate the memory of the kings whose offerings attested their reverence for Buchis. All the different occupants of Egypt are represented on these votive stelae which thus provide what is almost a historical summary. Darius the son of Hystaspes appears there side by side with the Ptolemies, and Alexander himself is shown dressed in traditional Egyptian costume and offering incense to the bull. The Roman emperors, again, would not be outdone in such piety: Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus Pius, Augustus and Diocletian, dressed as pharaohs, took part in the sacrificial rites on a series of stelae whose variations in style and writing (the last, in hieroglyphic characters, being that of Diocletian) add very remarkable aesthetic interest to the collection.

The site of Armant was so fully excavated that its history can now be reconstructed. A whole city emerged from the sand covering it, complete with houses, streets, palaces and temples. Armant was inhabited as early as predynastic times, its earliest occupation probably going back to 4000 B.C., and if we are to judge from the size of its cemetery, it must have been quite an extensive city even in the protodynastic period. Under the Old Kingdom it lost some of its importance, for power had moved towards the Delta, but it regained it later on when the dynasty of Mentuhetep, who was a native of this city, ruled at Thebes. Though less important than Memphis or Thebes, it still remained one of the pharaohs' coronation capitals. The temple which Tuthmosis III erected there in honour of the god of war, Menthu, who was the special god of Armant, was completely cleared in 1936. After his victory over the Nubians, recalled in bas-reliefs which show the prisoners, spoils and the animals brought from their distant land—a rhinoceros among them—Tuthmosis III expressed his gratitude to the warrior god by enlarging his sanctuary and decorating it with the famous golden gates. These have been partially recovered at least, for some of their granite posts covered with gold leaves still remain.

During the Roman period, Armant was threatened with invasion by the Blemyans, and as a result of this, part of the temple was

<sup>1</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 2nd January, 1937.

demolished to raise a defensive wall round the city. This Sudanese tribe, who were long thought of during the Middle Ages as fantastic beings whose form was barely human, left traces of their passage through Armant, and the most notable amongst them are tombs with pottery similar to that found by Emery at Sohag.

Cleopatra's memory still lives on in Armant. It was there that the beautiful queen had a temple built, the Mammisi, to celebrate the birth of the son she had by Caesar, Caesarion. It was destroyed in the course of the last century but excavations in 1936 brought to light the ruins of the sacred lake which was close by it. Imagination delights in picturing Cleopatra on her state barge with Caesarion at her side, sailing on the little lake of Armant; no doubt it was to her passing that its waters owed the healing powers with which they have been credited in a popular belief held up to the present day.

Another city, almost intact, was found by M. Bruyère, at Deir el Medina. Five years earlier, a large necropolis of the New Kingdom had yielded a large number of undamaged tombs amongst which were those of the governor of the necropolis, his wife and son. Continuing his excavations in this area, M. Bruyère uncovered the city which had been inhabited by the workmen and officials of the necropolis. Hence, in the neighbourhood of the Valley of the Kings, the artists, scribes, artisans, guards and priests who belonged to the cemetery staff lived in special townships. That of Deir el Medina was a full city, very well preserved, whose workrooms and shops have been cleared by archaeologists of the *Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*. A kind of Egyptian Pompeii is revealed here, no doubt less important historically and aesthetically than the other cities, but fascinating nevertheless, for like Pompeii it shows us the everyday life of its inhabitants; it does this so well that it is easy for us to picture what it was like and to imagine the sounds of its streets and the bustle of its stores and work-yards.

From the days of the Egypt expedition, French scholars realized what archaeological wealth was to be found on the site of Tanis and carried out fruitful exploration in the area. From the very beginning, it proved so rich in works of art that, in 1860, Mariette took up the work of his predecessors and found an extraordinary number of statues, obelisks and columns, and most important of all, the famous "Hyksos" sphinxes which have occasioned so much discussion. Champollion, indeed, believed that Tanis was the capital of the famous shepherd kings. At the close of the nineteenth century, Sir Flinders Petrie continued Mariette's excavations for a time but abandoned work before the site was fully cleared. Whilst scholars argued whether Tanis was ancient Avaris as claimed by Rougé, or Pi-Ramesses as contended by Brugsch, the site held fast to its secret.

In 1929, M. Pierre Montet of the University of Strasbourg started work in the area which Petrie had abandoned and tackled the huge mass of debris which, according to M. Drioton, could only be cleared by several generations of Egyptologists. But the very way in which the operations were undertaken indicate that M. Montet was determined to discover all the secrets of the *kom*. As a document bearing on the technique of the excavations, M. Drioton's<sup>1</sup> summary of them deserves to be quoted:

"The *kom* was tackled very intelligently. As the operation called for a very large number of workmen and they could not all be crammed into the same place if the best results were to be obtained, M. Montet divided them into four teams working on points in close relation with one another. One team undertook methodical excavation along the axis of the great temple, freeing the outer approach, clearing the crumbled gate of the precinct wall (built by the pharaoh Sesac, with materials taken for the most part from monuments of Ramses II) and making their way to the site of the first court from which exploration began. The second team, advancing through the north gate of the precinct, headed perpendicularly towards the axis of the temple and cleared the sub-foundation of a huge, ruined building of sun-dried brick. The third team started work on the *kom* more to the south of the enclosure of the great temple, where it found some private houses."

A number of years have passed since M. Montet published his book on the new excavations at Tanis. The huge *tell* or *kom* which Rifaud tackled as early as 1933 has now yielded all that can be expected of it; no doubt the excavations which will continue around the town itself will reveal other temples and cemeteries, but the main work has been done. When we examine the plan drawn up by M. Lezine in 1952, we have a bird's eye view of the main buildings of Avaris, the four sun-dried brick enclosure walls, the great temple situated at the centre of the city, the temple of Nectanebo, which is much smaller and attached to the former, the sacred lake, probably also sunk by Nectanebo beside his temple, the temple of Horus in the eastern angle of the enclosure, and the western angle of the necropolis; here the tombs of Psusennes, Shishak III and Osorkon II (very important for the works of art they contained and the information they yielded on the characters of these pharaohs and the events of their reign) were discovered intact. We see the ten pink granite monolith columns of the Eastern Temple, we recognize the curious outline (shaped like a Latin cross) of the Temple of Horus of the Plain, and the mighty pink granite colossi which,

<sup>1</sup> A full account of the excavations will be found in M. Montet's *Les Nouvelles Fouilles de Tanis*, published by the Faculté des Lettres of Strasbourg, 1933.

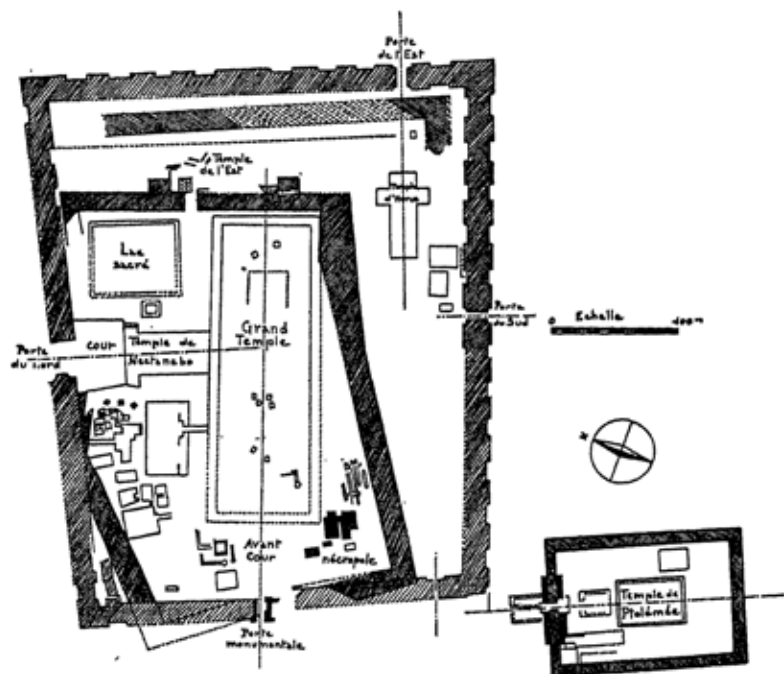


Fig. 21 Outline map of Tanis

together with the black marble lions with human heads—long known and lately attributed to the Hyksos—are the masterpieces of the statuary of Tanis. We also see the scattered remains of four colossi—images of Ramses II—one of which was called the Sun of the Princes. The custom had developed of giving names to huge statues; another of the colossi was the Charm of Egypt, and yet another was Menthu in the two lands. . . . The granite statue of Nectanebo II is not so huge, but it shows the king standing between the feet of a falcon larger than he is and which has the truly divine majesty of the Solar Horus.

Let us now examine the plan of the city which was drawn up by M. Lezine in 1951.<sup>1</sup> It shows us to what extent the huge mass of debris, accumulated from the remains of temples and palaces built over at least a thousand years, could take shape, and how precious are the lessons to be drawn from it. Tanis was near to the sea; it had active trade with Syria, especially Byblos, which provided Egypt with the wood for its heavy frameworks and ship-

<sup>1</sup> This can be seen in M. Pierre Montet's *Les Enigmes de Tanis*, Payot 1952.



building. When once objects of Egyptian origin were found at Byblos, it was logical to expect objects of Asiatic origin and the traces of oriental influence to be found in Tanis, which was the "point of departure" for maritime expeditions.

This influence has manifested itself in different ways and has continued to do so, for ever since the Commission for Egypt (which accompanied Napoleon in 1798) began to concern itself with the *kom* of San, archaeologists have been working in this area consistently, and after a brief interruption from 1941 to 1944, excavations went on as vigorously as before. They yielded a statue of Ramses II in which the pharaoh is associated with a goddess, Anta, who did not occur commonly in Egypt. She was none other than the warrior deity of the Canaanites, Anat. King Shishak III, whose tomb was fortunately discovered intact by M. Montet, wore a bracelet of Accadian origin on his wrist. Psusennes, whose tomb was also found intact by M. Montet, sought to take with him into the other world a lapis-lazuli sphere engraved with cuneiform characters which had belonged to a Mesopotamian princess, Napalte, a native of Enlil and probably the king's consort. Ramses II, whom we have seen under the protection of the Syrian goddess Anta, appears in a magnificent group of granite statues associated with another Syrian god, Hurun, replacing the traditional Horus to whom he may have been assimilated. The Egyptian pantheon is known to have received foreign gods, and it was not for political reasons alone that he practised the religious syncretism here exemplified. He went even further by allowing his name and image to be linked with those of the god Seth, who was abominated by the Egyptians because he had killed Osiris. The hated Seth was most shamelessly brought into prominence by the Hyksos, who worshipped him with great piety, but excavations at Tanis have shown that the people of the Delta adored him long before he was adopted and popularized by the Hyksos. Ever cautious and knowing what could be expected of supernatural aid, Ramses II sought to win the good will of this equivocal power, but when the Hyksos had finally been driven from the Two Kingdoms, his images and inscriptions were struck down from the monuments of Tanis; this accursed divinity was loathed not only for killing his brother but for being the favourite god of the former invader.

Another proof of the importance of Asiatic influence at Tanis was provided by the discovery of foundation sacrifices which were made to invoke divine protection for the doors of temples and sacred enclosures. Doors had great symbolic value in ancient times, and this was even perpetuated in the name of Sublime Porte which was taken by the court of the Sultan of Turkey. Foundation deposits,

which have lingered on in our own time in the ceremony of laying a foundation stone, were prophylactic rites as well as proof that the king who intended to build on a site had taken possession of it. The significance of objects buried in the foundations of temples and tombs is not always clear and is sometimes subject to a variety of interpretations by Egyptologists. Some are difficult to explain. It is particularly interesting to study a list of the objects which M. Montet found in the tombs of Osorkon II, Shishak and Psusennes, which were most prolific; the gold masks of Shishak and Psusennes, and the silver lid of Shishak's sarcophagus are magnificent works of art. But the temple foundation deposits were sometimes disconcerting; plaques were found in them engraved with the name and authority of the dedicator, which is quite reasonable and still done today on foundation stones, but why, in the temple of Siamon, should it be necessary to add the remains of birds, bread and pieces of meat? What was the reason for such trifles (in appearance at least) as a sun-baked brick, a shapeless piece of alabaster, a piece of resin and a rectangular block of sandstone, which were buried under the temple of Nectanebo? Why should there be two roughly hewn blocks of quartzite among the gold and silver plaques and precious stones in the foundation deposit of Ptolemy Soter?

M. Montet gives a very interesting explanation for these apparent anomalies. He says that the object of a foundation deposit is to sanctify the land on which building is to take place, whether it is to hold a temple, a palace or a tomb. It was sanctified by the placing in it of pieces of rock or metal which were known to have natural and magical properties. These metals and stones were usually rare, and could only be obtained with great difficulty by having them brought from remote and sometimes desert regions. For the building in which it was placed, a piece of quartzite had the special effect of invoking the protection of the goddess Hathor, the Lady of the Red Mountain where the rock was to be found. The Egyptians undoubtedly believed that certain stones and metals were related to the stars and that one entered into harmony with heavenly powers by the deliberate use of earthly objects which possessed affinities of this kind.

Unlike the peoples of the east, the Egyptians did not indulge in human sacrifice when foundations were being laid; if an extremely rare example of this does occur, as at Tanis, it is the mark of an Asiatic influence finding its way among the ancient traditions of the Egyptians and infecting them with a barbarous element at which the pharaohs had always balked. The skeletons of adults and children which were found in the foundations of the enclosure walls built by Ramses II and Psusennes were quite out of keeping with

normal practice and can only be explained by the grim intrusion of Syrian custom, possibly introduced by foreign princesses whom the pharaohs had married. No foundation sacrifice is to be found outside Tanis and Wadi Tumilat, which in Egypt was a kind of crossroads connecting with the routes used by the peoples of Asia.

Nectanebo's sacred lake, whose walls were built with blocks bearing inscriptions and bas-reliefs which had been removed from ancient temples, today provides a wonderful source of information concerning the kings who followed one another at Tanis and the buildings they left there. Whether the destruction which occurred was the work of man or nature (for the pharaohs had no qualms about using the buildings and even the statues of their predecessors), the site of Tanis was in a state of amazing confusion, and it took many years to establish the location and layout of its buildings with any certainty. The archaeologist's task was complicated by the re-use of ancient materials; reasons of economy may have made this a common custom because it was easier to use blocks which had already been cut than to expend money and effort in extracting them from a quarry; but perhaps, as M. Varille suggests, there were religious reasons as well, for by building with a stone which had already been consecrated, one gained the *mana* it had acquired. A distinction has to be drawn between the blocks bearing the inscription of the builder and those belonging to buildings from which they were removed, and this is not always easy.

There was a greater risk of this kind of confusion at Tanis than anywhere else because the re-use of old materials was common practice, and this was particularly noticeable in the walls of the sacred pool which were built with limestone blocks from neighbouring temples. These blocks had to be perfectly jointed, for excellent builders though they were, the Egyptians did not know of a waterproof mortar. To ensure the water-tightness of a huge tank like Nectanebo's sacred lake, which measured 60 metres by 50, and where there was boating and swimming, it was important to use blocks in which the jointing did not leave even the slightest gap.

The remains of the enclosure-walls of Tanis have also made it possible to form some conception of the way in which the architects and builders of Egypt worked. Buildings did not have any foundations in the true sense of the word; they were erected on the bare sand. This did not jeopardize their stability for sand cannot be compressed as long as it is prevented from slipping; it was sufficient to enclose the surface of the building-site with a caisson-wall to ensure that the base did not shift.

Operations carried out at Tud (or ancient Taphium) south of Luxor by the *Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, under M. P.

Jouguet, cleared the remains of a Ptolemaic temple devoted to the cult of Menthu, the god of war, whom Tuthmosis III worshipped at Armant. In 1934 an even older temple was discovered beneath it, dating from the reign of Senusret I, but unfortunately it was not possible to distinguish anything more of it than its layout. Among the most precious discoveries at Tud, mention should be made of the splendid but mysterious treasure which was found in bronze chests bearing the name of Amenemhat III, the third pharaoh of the twelfth dynasty, whose reign was around 1936 B.C.; then, as an instance of the curious twists of fate which occur in archaeology, there are some objects which go back to 1936 B.C. and which were uncovered in 1936—new and in perfect condition, just as they were when they left the hands of their makers, as though they dated, not from 1936 B.C. but A.D. These treasures have provided scholars with a great many problems; the engraved cylinders, the decorations of the vases and the style of the jewellery give no indication of their origins. They were hitherto quite unknown in Egypt and very vaguely suggest an Asiatic background though this does not permit us to guess the people among whom they were created. It is presumed that they were part of the booty brought back by Amenemhat III from one of his campaigns in Asia.

A great many mysteries still remain to be solved in and around Egypt. As an example of this, discussion has now been going on for a long time to establish the whereabouts of the curious land of Punt, which is so often mentioned in Egyptian texts. It is now thought that it was situated in the mysterious kingdom of Sheba, the locality of which is also still very uncertain. After a visit by two Frenchmen, Arnaud and Halévy, then by the German, Glaser, the ancient kingdom of Sheba, or what is at all events thought to have been the kingdom of Sheba, was studied by two German scholars, Carl Athjens and Hermann von Wissmann; during their two long expeditions to the Yemen and Hadramaut in 1929 and 1931, they assembled the most intriguing information about this lost empire. The temple of the sun-goddess, Dhat Bahdan, which they discovered at Hugga, has provided some very important landmarks for our scant knowledge of Sabaean art; if they may not yet take us back to the legendary Queen Balkis, whose riddles so astonished King Solomon, they nevertheless throw some light on Yemenite style, the remains of which are still very mysterious. It is now known that the earliest temples of the land of Punt were circular, whilst the temple of Dhat Bahdan (which dates from the third century B.C.) was square.

Some very schematic statues of the dead have been found in the necropolis of Sanaa, and it is very difficult to connect these images with any art already known. They bear no resemblance to those

found in the enigmatic cemetery of Bahrein in Arabia, which has yielded so many curious objects. The expression of awe-inspiring and sometimes savage sternness to be seen in the statutes of Sanaa, the monumental simplicity of their composition, and the geometric severity of their masses bear no relation whatsoever to the art of the Egyptians. If today it is true that the typical Yemenite has very pronounced mongoloid features, perhaps it is in Asia that we should look for the origins of the earliest Sabaeans, who occupied the country before the Semite invasion which occurred about a thousand years before Christ and was followed by the introduction of the Semitic culture and alphabet into a land which had previously remained faithful to its native traditions. I cannot say whether we can compare the ancient round temples of Sheba with those of Zimbabwe, the mysterious dead kingdom of Southern Rhodesia, as Tungal has done (it is in Rhodesia that he places the ancient gold producing centre of Ophir), but in Yemenite art and culture there are still too many unknowns for us to make more than a brief reference to the dominions of the lovely Balkis.

We still find a considerable element of mystery in Nubia. At Bellana near Abu-Simbel, for example, some tumuli have been discovered which belonged to a half-Christian, half-pagan Nubian tribe, possibly the Nobatae, at the beginning of Christian times. Among them there was the tomb of a queen, the only one in the whole necropolis which had not been robbed. The body had been destroyed by water which had seeped in, but the splendid if barbaric jewellery which had covered it had not been damaged.

In this necropolis, which was cleared by W. B. Emery and L. P. Kirwan, the royal graves hollowed out from the silt of the west bank of the Nile contained, in a kind of vestibule, the skeletons of slaves sacrificed in the funeral ceremony. The body of the king himself was lying beside another corpse which was doubtless that of a page, and close by lay the remains of a dog. It should be remembered that the custom of burying a dog with its master goes far back into antiquity, since we meet it as early as predynastic and even prehistoric times among a people like the Tasians. This survival of a custom which possibly goes back ten thousand years is all the more striking when we see it side by side with objects which seem almost modern in comparison; the weapons and jewellery found on the body, as well as the funerary equipment, crowns, vases, lamps and perfume-pans, show the evidence of a great diversity of sources. Work of Byzantine origin is to be found there next to Greek coins and Egyptian jewels, some of which are in rather barbarous taste whilst others are infused with the delicate Hellenic spirit which inspired all Alexandrine culture.

There were other tombs containing many skeletons of camels and horses as well as the bodies of servants, and in one of them the archaeologists who came upon it were appalled to discover the skeletons of four young people who still had the rope with which they were strangled round their necks.

Nubia's prehistory is better known since the research conducted in the area of Anibe by George Steindorff of the University of Leipzig. The German scholar found a large cemetery there which probably goes back to 2000 B.C., and belonged to the people referred to as *Group C* who settled in Nubia at that time. It contains about a thousand tombs in stone tumuli of the type known as cairns. The skeletons in them are lying on their right side and looking north; near them they have some curious glazed black pottery with incised geometrical designs. Also found there were some strange clay idols, whose features were barely drawn in, but which were covered, on the other hand, with designs intended to reproduce clothing or tattoos. There were some monolith stelae among the tombs, bringing megalithic monuments to mind, and twenty-four of them have remained standing. These megaliths are as mysterious as the ancient and unidentified culture—probably of African origin—to which those of Malta and Minorca are related.

In 1900 B.C., the Egyptians invaded Nubia and settled at Anibe. It is from this period that the cemetery of Egyptian tombs can be dated; these are completely different from the native cairns since they are like those found in all parts of Egypt. Usually they consist of a brick pyramid covering a shaft which led to the mortuary chamber.

At Firka in the Sudan, below the second cataract, the Oxford Expedition under Mr. L. P. Kirwan cleared a necropolis bearing the marks of the Meroitic culture during a period when, having survived the fall of Meroe itself, it had absorbed Byzantino-Egyptian elements. In these tombs the evidence of human sacrifices was found—the bodies of numerous slaves who, just as those at Bellana, had been buried with their masters to go with them in the next life. In the skulls of some there was the hole from the axe which had struck them down, whilst other skeletons, showing no wounds, must have belonged to those who were buried alive. This barbarous custom was widely observed in the Sudan, for at Kerma Dr. Reisner found graves containing slaves who had been sacrificed in the same way. At Firka, the skeletons of cows, horses, donkeys and camels filled a chamber in a cemetery which probably dates from the fourth or fifth century A.D.; near them were found the axes used to kill them.

Returning to Northern Egypt, we come to the excavations of Professor Sami Gabra, who cleared some very significant temple-

tombs at Tuna el Gebel on the site of ancient Hermopolis. This shows a composite style, essentially that of Hellenist, or in other words, Hellenized Egypt. Hermopolis was one of the centres of Greek culture in the third century B.C. The Greek language was predominantly used there, and with it, Greek customs, decoration and art permeated all aspects of Egyptian life, even in its most traditional elements—funerary rites and techniques.

The temple-tombs discovered by Professor Lefebvre at Hermopolis are a blend of all these characteristics. Some are purely Egyptian, strictly conforming with tradition, whilst others near them, probably of the same period, are essentially Greek in architecture and decoration. Yet others confuse Greek and Egyptian elements to such an extent that in the sanctuaries dedicated to the god Thoth, it is possible to recognize decorative themes borrowed from Homeric epics and treated in Hellenist style. In one of them, the priest Petosiris is shown, sometimes in Greek and sometimes Egyptian dress, and even sacrificing a bull in the manner of the Greeks.

In studying the frescoes of two tombs, in which they were painted on white stucco, roughly laid on the walls of sun-dried brickwork, M. Sami Gabra draws attention to their hasty execution and adds, "It is remarkable to find on the walls of a city of Middle Egypt, 375 miles south of Alexandria, scenes which are purely Hellenic and show no relation with things Egyptian. These discoveries show how deeply Greek influence penetrated into the Nile Valley during the five centuries which followed the accession of Ptolemy I, through Greek schools where the Egyptians learnt Greek poems and legends by heart, and through theatres where Greek tragedies were performed."

The necropolis of Hellenist tombs discovered at Mustapha Pasha by Dr. Adriani, curator of the Museum of Alexandria, is purely Greek in character. Unlike the catacombs of Kom el Shugafa, which are eclectic and composite, the tombs of Mustapha Pasha have nothing Egyptian about them. This can be explained by the fact that Alexandria, of which the town was after all a dependency, had been completely Hellenized under the Ptolemies. If Hellenization had permeated the funerary art of a city as far from the coast as Hermopolis, how could it fail to be dominant in the very centre of Greek trade and culture in Egypt?

The tombs of Mustapha Pasha appear as splendid architectural structures in pure Dorian style, giving no suggestion that we are now in Egypt. "They are singularly well proportioned," writes M. Adriani, "and the freshness of the marbled paintings on the walls of the third and fourth chambers heightens the beauty of the effect. Above the central portico there is a painting which represents

horsemen wearing plumed hats, bringing their offerings to the priestess. There is much grace and remarkable liberty in the treatment of this composition. The tombs were doubtless built during the reign of Ptolemy Philopator, in a period when Egyptian influence had not yet made itself felt in Alexandrine art, and decoration was purely Hellenic. Interesting comparisons with the paintings of Pompeii are inevitably called to mind."

The excavations carried out at Tell el Amarna by the Egypt Exploration Society under the direction of Mr. J. D. S. Pendlebury, have considerably enriched our knowledge of the city of the Great Heretic. We know that when Amenophis IV accomplished the dreadful religious revolution which substituted the cult of the Sun's disk, Aten, for the old gods—and Amun in particular—he left the traditional capital Thebes, which was both the centre of the cult of Amun and the abode of his priests, a powerful and dreaded brotherhood. This reform was highly significant: in effect it was a demonstration of the desire to break with what had been the traditional faith of the Egyptians for so many centuries. The theriomorphic and anthropomorphic divinities of the past, which were perhaps the deified chiefs of clans or animal totems, were now replaced by a single god who manifested himself through the light of the sun. This meant a complete upheaval in all their ways of thought and behaviour for a people who had lived with them for thousands of years without changing anything. It was a metaphysical revolution since its object was nothing less than a complete transformation of religious thought and the rites which were its expression; and it was a political revolution as well since the new king proposed to withdraw from the more or less unobtrusive watch which the college of priests of Amun exercised over the pharaoh.

It was a remarkable man who had the courage to impose a reform which wiped out all ancient traditions on a country which was so profoundly traditionalist. Physically, with his short legs, enormous stomach, extraordinarily broad hips, narrow face and long chin he was almost a monster. And it was this man who reversed the ancient canons of a stylized and conventional beauty, and established absolute realism, demanding that artists represent him as he was—hideous. But he was not repulsive in his ugliness. In the musing, melancholy face which topped the misshapen body, there was a yearning which nothing could assuage, the dream of an idealist who wanted to rebuild the world according to his own desires; and it was no impulsive idealist who, when still quite young, joined battle with the invincible priests of Amun and triumphed, though briefly, over all the obstacles with which Egypt confronted him: a rich clergy which derived power from the fervour of the people,



and beliefs thousands of years old on which all the manifestations of public and private life were based.

In order to carry out his reforms, he was compelled to leave Thebes far behind him. A new life was beginning and it had to work itself out in a new setting. The temples of Thebes, mysterious and shadowy like caves, could no longer meet the ceremonial needs of the new god, whose rites were to be performed in the fullness of the light; and the ancient palaces of the city were filled with the images of the old gods, the enemies of the heretic-king. He was therefore obliged to convey his capital to a completely new site where he could build his city as he chose, according to his own plans, and in conformity with his religious ideals.

He chose a kind of valley, situated between the Nile and rocky barriers at a point equidistant from Cairo and Luxor, a fertile plain, well irrigated and rich in flowers and trees. In this uninhabited region a city arose by the will of the king on the site of a village known today as Tell el Amarna, which has given it its name. The name which the king conferred on it was "Akhet-Aton", the Horizon of the Sun's Disk, and in the same way, he rejected his own name, Amenophis, to take that of Akhnaton—"it pleases Aten."<sup>1</sup>

For all the functionaries and courtiers who wished to remain in favour with the king, his whim to change capitals was an order. I believe that at that time there were few who realized the significance of the Atenian reformation, its religious one at all events, for its political meaning was plain to everyone. There were those who held that it was essentially non-Egyptian and who ascribed the inspiration for the new monotheism to the king's Syrian antecedents. The analogy is quite a vague one. The cult of Osiris, which had been traditional for thousands of years, was much closer to the Syrian worship of Adonis, from which it may well have derived, than the religion of Aten which has nothing in common with Semitic religions. So far from this, the most striking thing about the Atenian reformation was its extraordinary originality in rejecting the whole of the old pantheon to replace it with a single god who had no image other than the sun; and that it seemed to attach little significance to magical funerary rites, which the Egyptians held as so important because they guaranteed their survival in the world to come.

Akhnaton's religion was much more idealistic, and instead of laying emphasis on life beyond the grave, its greater concern was with the here and now. The king's political views also had their roots in idealism; Akhnaton cleaved to a belief in human fellowship; it was his view that kindness and love could better mankind. He refused to exercise tyranny or make war. One can easily imagine the

<sup>1</sup> See John Pendlebury's *Tell el Amarna*, London, 1936.

practical outcome of all his fine intentions. The Egyptian empire declined towards its downfall, its enemies grew bold and made ready to tear it to pieces, and if death had not interrupted the reckless king as he disastrously applied his noble ideal to the sorry truth of human nature, Egypt might never have recovered from the fatal experiment.

Those of his courtiers who saw more clearly were able to recognize this. They realized that the pharaoh's ideas were preparing the way for a complete break from the past with which they were still living. They knew that the people would not follow him because they were always traditionalist and clung to their ancient customs. The power of the priests of Amun might be temporarily eclipsed, but there was little likelihood that Akhnaton would reign long enough to succeed in destroying their ancient authority. Apart from the priesthood of Ra, obviously pleased to witness the diminished glory of the rival priesthood of Amun, and apart from certain artists who enthusiastically welcomed the extraordinary new lease of life which the king's aesthetic ideas brought to the rigid formalism of Egyptian art, no one sincerely accepted the religion of Aten. It was too new, too different, too out of the ordinary. The people held fast to their own gods, and every innovation shocked them as a departure from custom. As for statesmen, they weighed up the disaster towards which Akhnaton's dangerous policy of goodness was leading the country. Though they had to leave Thebes and make their way to the new capital, I am convinced that some of the courtiers and officials must have smiled sceptically as they prepared for the move, and set off for the city of the Horizon of the Sun's Disk, telling themselves that they would probably soon be coming back to their old palaces in Thebes.

Whatever private doubts there may have been, there had to be a display of zeal and obedience to the commands of the pharaoh, who urged for progress in the building operations. Akhnaton had envisaged things on a large scale. Within the limits marked out by the stele-boundary-stones which defined its area, the Utopist king foresaw a huge city, much larger than was necessary, but one which would become the heart and focus of the empire. So huge that, in spite of the unending operations carried out, first by Germans and then by Englishmen, excavations have still not cleared all its monuments—far from it—and in spite of the conscientious efforts of archaeologists, sand still covers a great many of its temples and private dwellings.

The aerial photographs taken by the Royal Air Force give a striking impression of the areas which have been cleared and the even greater area where work still remains to be done. By following

archaeologists in their yearly reports, it is possible to witness the progressive and comparatively rapid clearance of a city which was built and destroyed in such quick succession that some of its houses were not finished yet when the demolition parties struck their first blows. This accounts for the rather unstable character which we find in all the buildings of Tell el Amarna; they are resentful of the haste with which they were built. Akhnaton realized that time, the unflinching power of ancient Egypt, was working against him. Deep down, perhaps, he himself lacked confidence in the success of his reforms and knew that when he was dead things would resume their traditional course. This only made him all the more impatient to complete the capital which he had dedicated to the Sun and to urge on the erection of the monuments which were to serve it.

There was no time to use ashlar; it would have taken too long to transport it over such a great distance and then to hew and shape it. The new city was built of bricks, and these were sometimes painted to have the appearance of stone in the same way that certain decorative features which should have been gilded were painted yellow, and faience ornamentation was imitated in frescoes. All this indicates the little faith that private citizens especially were moved to place in the building of their homes. Official buildings and royal palaces, on the other hand, were resplendent in magnificence which was proper to the cult of Aten and the greatness of the king. It was a city built of bricks—air- and sun-dried bricks mixed with pebbles which would weather easily. Even before official demolition gangs and white ants had bent to their task of destruction, the poor materials used were already demonstrating how hurriedly the work had been carried out. A bright coat of paint concealed the poor quality of the brickwork; the important thing was to get everything done quickly. Like most people who have little hope of living to a ripe old age, Akhnaton was anxious to see *his own* city completed, and barely concerned himself with the supervision of his labourers. His chief concern was to see that the new aesthetic principles which he had dictated to painters and sculptors were enacted—principles which broke with the continuous tradition of Egyptian art and introduced forms and ideas which were so modern that the revolution seems to have been as radical in this sphere as it was in religion.

We have already seen how the sculptors who undertook to create his images were enjoined to do so with a realism which wholly conflicted with the country's established custom. The king was a divine being and free of blemish. His was a formal and monotonous beauty, so hallowed by time that it would almost have been sacrilege to change it. He was represented in certain acts of his public life and

these were always the same. If he waged war, it was always as a triumphant conqueror who crushed his enemies beneath his chariot wheels and built a pile of severed heads. His military exploits were as splendid as his achievements in sport; in 1936, near the sphinx a stele was found on which Amenhotep II boasts of his athletic prowess. Without tiring, he rowed for three miles against the current whilst his oarsmen, after half a mile, were begging for permission to stop; he broke the stubbornest horses; with his arrows he pierced copper plates as thick as a hand without slowing his chariot. . . . All this recalls the hunting stories of the Assyrian kings and the account of the "bag", with a vague hint of the "shoots" at Rambouillet. But Akhnaton loathed war as something unjust and inhuman. Practising the ideal of non-violence, he gave way to invaders and offered the other cheek to anyone who struck him, be he Hittite or Mitannian. War was a savage abomination which he hoped to root out of human custom through his fervent leadership; it was monstrous for a king to be represented as a destroyer and killer. As for his sporting achievements, anyone who has seen his statues will realize that this sickly, deformed intellectual, with his puny arms and unhealthy fat, must have devoted little time to physical exercise and acquitted himself poorly in it.

It was not as a conqueror or as a solemn, impersonal and distant ruler that he wished to be remembered, but as the good-natured father of a family who fondled Nefertiti, his lovely wife, and played with his children, six unclothed, mischievous little princesses who climbed on his knees and touched his chin. When he went driving in his chariot, all his household went with him. Perhaps some other people would have found this touching; the Egyptian, however, was more amused than moved, and the family drives seemed so comic that they were caricatured. Some terra-cotta chariots were found and these were ridden by monkeys; they faithfully reproduce the attitudes in which artists represented the royal family . . . a sufficient indication of the change which had occurred in Egyptian society.

Reality was the king's command; living creatures and things were to be represented as they were. Reality was beautiful and nature was to be observed. Nothing was to mask the fundamental beauty of everything living under the sun and by its favour. The vegetable and animal kingdoms, which were certainly not excluded from ancient art, but were not included in it for their own merits and intrinsic qualities, now became the artist's favourite themes. To represent things as they were meant that from the outset they were to be seen in a new way, that fresh vision was to be brought to a universe which was constantly being renewed. The simple, artless

experience of feelings and impressions was to be directly and immediately translated in concrete truth.

Thus, in the painting of Tell el Amarna, with its ceilings decorated with vine-arbors, its pavements representing ponds with aquatic birds playing in them, its moving, multi-form life conveyed with a love for the object, an affection for things which had never before been shown, we come to one of Egyptian art's most arresting phases. In the history of an art which still holds so much mystery for us, which remains so difficult to grasp, this is perhaps the only point where it suddenly becomes clear and accessible to our tastes and understanding. Amarna's painting is worlds nearer to us than any other work in Egyptian art: in its impressionism, its feeling for nature, the freshness of its vision and emotion, and its *freedom* from motive in loving the things it represents for their inherent beauty and evocative power, and not by virtue of some abstract symbolism or some eternal religious truth. Modern consciousness lives in a modern city, and with a little restoration it was easy to adapt one of the houses of Tell el Amarna to the needs of the archaeological commission which now occupies it.

The plan of the city is itself something quite original: in every sphere Akhnaton broke with the traditions accepted by his predecessors. There is an immense fascination in the discovery of a city which, though far from intact (for those who destroyed it were determined not to leave one stone standing on another—not a difficult task to accomplish when everything had been built with bricks) was none the less complete in its layout; a city uncluttered by the accumulated trials and sorrows of successive generations; a city where everything remaining was almost razed, but in which it is easy to recognize the arrangement of its streets, palaces, temples and houses. Free from any kind of upheaval before the one which destroyed it, Tell el Amarna's life was a short one but still long enough to provide us with some conception of the public life of the king and the private life of the ordinary citizen. Some houses show the signs of a comfort which was plain and tasteful—house number U.25.II, for example, or T.36.II. In case these numbers seem puzzling, we should explain that the town was very large, measuring more than 8 kilometres in length and an average of 1 kilometre in breadth, so that its different sectors had to be numbered to avoid any confusion. Knowing so little of the streets and householders, we have had to designate houses according to their positions. "It was for this reason," writes Mr. Pendlebury, the director of the excavations, in his book on Tell el Amarna, "that the Germans divided the site to be excavated into sections 200 metres square, lettered consecutively from west to east, and numbered from north to south. Thus square

A.I. is in the north-western corner whilst T.40 is somewhere in the centre and Z.60 is near the south-eastern corner. Every house in one of these squares is numbered as soon as it is cleared. It takes no time at all to establish that house T.24.I is among those of the northern suburbs and situated in the *wadi* or bed of the river: a moment's search soon identifies it. Similarly, Q.42.21 is the record office, N.49.1 the house of the vizier, Nakht, and so on."

Sir Flinders Petrie had used a similar method in classifying pottery. Instead of giving a description for every object discovered, he categorized the forms already known into a number of types which were also designated by letters and numbers for quick identification.

We cannot give a summary account of the monuments which were discovered; this will be found in Mr. Pendlebury's noteworthy book, together with photographs and maps which are a necessary complement to description. The only observation we should like to make is that the private dwelling was much more open to the sun than the older form of Egyptian house: it was important that Aten should be able to enter everywhere. It is still debated whether the middle room was replaced by an open court; further excavations will no doubt answer this question. Where temples are concerned, there is no doubt of this; the dark and mysterious sanctuary was replaced by porticoes and courts where the sun's rays could flood in freely. The new religion was one of light and love and not of darkness and terror; this is the most modern and revolutionary aspect of Akhnaton's religious reformation. The arrangement of temples were changed and so were religious rites, though we are unable to say what form they took. Clearly the dark, magical and fearful aspect of the old temples had gone. It was now possible to walk in broad daylight right up to Aten's sacrificial altar, where only a short time ago one had to grope one's way forward, blinded in passing from the light of the sun through shadow and thickening darkness into the deep night of the sanctum.

One would have thought that a religion of this kind would have gained the allegiance of the whole people, but it did nothing of the kind. As soon as Akhnaton was dead, the priests of Amun regained their power. The reformer was declared to be an arch heretic. His images were shattered, his name erased from all monuments, his tomb defiled to deprive him of survival and future glory, and it can even be assumed that his mummy was burnt to ensure that he was quite dead. Then demolition gangs set out for the city of the Horizon of Aten and made ready to wipe it out completely. Its temples were razed and a layer of cement was poured over their debris as though to destroy the pestilence which might otherwise be reborn in the ruins. Those who owned private houses had already

abandoned them to return to Thebes; some had not even had the time to complete their uncertain new homes and one example was found of a doorway where the lintel was about to be placed in position—it was already at the foot of the stairs—when the order came for work to be abandoned; thus it was that things stayed as they were until they were finally discovered by archaeologists.

So methodically was Tell el Amarna destroyed—and with a fanatic hate which even found its way into the heretic's tomb—that only the bases of columns and walls remained standing. Those who were responsible for the destruction of the city would never have thought that this would be sufficient to restore it. There is a kind of posthumous justice in archaeology, and it is curious to observe that in spite of the efforts of his successors to wipe out all traces of his reign, Akhnaton, of all the kings of Egypt, is the one we know best and the one nearest to us. In the same way, of all cities, Tell el Amarna is the one which has best preserved the evidence left by its inhabitants. Even in its most modest details private life here is clearly recognizable, and better than anywhere else we see how the ancient Egyptians led their lives and ran their homes. In the aristocratic quarter and in that of the working people we see splendid palaces and damp labourers' dwellings. We can recognize stores and warehouses, the fittings of police stations and barracks, and the arrangement of gardens and ornamental lakes. We can even distinguish the dwellings of foreigners from those of the natives, for there were many outsiders in Tell el Amarna, Syrians, Cretans and perhaps even Europeans. When masks and casts of Tuthmosis were found in the so-called sculptor's house, there was also the astonishing discovery of a large number of faces which were not of Egyptian type—some of them being clearly Nordic-German in character.

The custom of making a cast of the model's face to ensure a complete likeness is a proof of the desire for realism which inspired all Amarnian art. In some of the casts from life, one can also see that it was not enough for the artist to take an impression; sometimes he retouched them in order to remove anything which was set or rigid and restore their living expression. In 1936 some sculptor's sketches were found, some remarkably true images of Queen Neferiti. Of course she does not appear as beautiful in these as she is in the famous bust in the museum of Berlin; she is old, worn, and the sharpness of her beauty, accentuated in a face which is narrow, bony and too long, has become almost ridiculous. Before we go on, it is intriguing to observe that the sculptor of the famous polychrome bust which immortalizes one of the most enchanting women who ever lived, was not afraid to perpetuate her "white eye", a

reminder of the ophthalmic complaint which tragically marred her exquisite loveliness.

I have said that in spite of several years of active excavation, a number of the problems set for us by Tell el Amarna still remain to be solved, especially those concerning the likelihood of collaboration by Cretan artists and the permanent settlement of a colony of Minoan painters whose presence would strongly have influenced Amarnian art; the parallels which it shows with some aspects of the art of Knossos are obvious. Apart from the famous hymns of the king to the glory of Aten, we still know nothing about the ritual of the sun god. What is more, we are unable to say whether the traditional funerary customs were preserved or suppressed. A great deal of work still remains for archaeologists, as far, that is, as the material which escaped the zeal of the demolition gangs, the greed of the white ants—who eat everything they can and ruin the rest—and the covetousness and foul play of the natives, will answer all their questions. Excavations have thrown valuable light on the great palace, which has been completely cleared, with its huge halls, its harems, its gardens and the "appearance window" where the king showed himself to his people, just as he is so often to be seen in bas-reliefs and paintings. It was here that some scaffolding was found, still standing against walls which had been left unfinished for the same reason that the lintel of the doorway had been thrown aside just when it was ready to be placed in position. We now know that this scaffolding consisted of banked up earth and debris which rose up, at the same time as the wall, like a terrace on which the builders could work. A burial place for cats and dogs was uncovered in a kind of pit. But the most important historical document found by the last expedition was an inscription which establishes that Akhnaton shared power with his father Amenophis III for at least nine years. This makes an appreciable difference to what we knew of royal chronology and to some extent confirms what had been suspected for some time—that Tutankhamun was probably also a son of Amenophis III.

The city of the Horizon of the Sun's Disk has still not yielded all its secrets, and we have much to learn about the works and thoughts of the Great Heretic, the worshipper of Aten.



## CHAPTER VII

### SYRIA

JUST as Iraq's position under the British mandate gave a new impulse to excavations in Mesopotamia, so the archaeological history of Syria also underwent a transformation when that country was placed under a French mandate after the war of 1914 to 1918. Exploration and discovery, previously rare, difficult, inadequately accomplished, and frowned upon by the Turkish government, were now to become common, opening to scholars a sphere of activity so huge that its limits have barely been visualized.

The French Archaeological Service in Syria deserves universal gratitude for its varied and significant discoveries. These have enabled us to recognize the part played by Syria in spreading civilization throughout the ancient world. Though not without an inventive power of her own, she now emerges clearly as a great centre of exchange, a cross-roads where the produce of the east and west came together, where Asia and Africa made contact. It was here that the Semitic and Aryan worlds brought their merchandise and their ideas. Peaceful caravans made their way through it at the leisurely pace of their camels, laden with precious bales; and invading cohorts, though leaving devastation behind them, also left foreign forms and ideas, introducing strange cultures which sometimes took firm root or were content to assert a varying influence on the work of local artists and craftsmen.

In the evolution of the ancient world, Syria appears through its history as a kind of melting-pot where everything blended into a compound. In its geographical position, it was close to Mesopotamia and endowed with a coast which favoured shipping and therefore trade; it was within easy reach of the Aegean Isles and in direct contact with Egypt; it opened out on to Iran by its caravan routes, and on to Anatolia through easily penetrable valleys; its situation at the junction of all trade and military routes equipped it for the concentrating and transmitting function which for centuries it was to fulfil. Just as the River of the Dog bears witness through innumerable inscriptions to the many different races which used it as an invasion route, so Syrian art, in all it created, preserves the seal of every influence which it assimilated and transformed. Cyprus

and Crete, Sumer and Egypt, Nineveh and the Hittites, the Argives and Mitanians—all met here and worked together.

Nothing gives a more specific idea of the social and aesthetic character of Syria than the trading quarter discovered by Claude Schaeffer at Ras-Shamra. This city, which was the capital of Ugarit in northern Syria, 155 miles north of Beirut, was a focus for all the elements of Mediterranean commerce. Like Venice, Genoa and Barcelona in the Middle Ages, and like Shanghai in modern times, it contained "concessions" where every country, represented by its merchants and bankers, had dwellings, shops and temples. A large, active and industrious foreign population had been established among the natives and traded with them. Of course this was intended for the biggest possible profit to both sides, though sometimes there was a clash of interests. The Mycenaeans, who were cunning and skilful, were tough competitors for the native Ugaritians. M. Schaeffer accounts for his discovery in 1935 of family vaults (for people buried their dead in the basements of their own houses) by the antagonism which must have existed between the citizens of Ras-Shamra and foreign immigrants who came to live among them. The custom of burying the dead in one's home was actually a characteristic of extremely primitive and rudimentary civilizations. Ras-Shamra's culture, on the contrary, was highly accomplished and advanced. This form of burial, so extraordinary in the circumstances, can only be explained by a situation in which two or more races, living together in the same town, held on determinedly to those differences which separated them from one another—so much that they chose to keep the remains of their dead in their homes to save them from having to share a graveyard where no discrimination was observed. This custom may have been restricted to foreigners who were not entitled to use the common burial-place, for in the family tombs, the funerary equipment found was for the most part rich in Egyptian, Mycenaean and Cypriot goods, and the skeletons, judging from their features were not of Semitic origin. Among the most interesting funerary equipment was that of a Mycenaean goldsmith, whose tools were exactly like those of a modern jeweller, including a set of scales, instruments, ingots, and the remains of broken jewellery to be melted down.

On the western slope of the tell covering Ras-Shamra, M. Schaeffer cleared some houses probably belonging to the city which vanished in the thirteenth century B.C., following invasions by the Sea Peoples; it had known great splendour and prosperity, and these are still reflected in its ruins and tombs. The Ras-Shamra of this period could rival any modern city in the luxury and comfort of its private dwellings. Solidly built and in an architectural style

which was simple and had the hewn stone corner pillar to strengthen the building and serve as its main ornamentation, they were large and spacious. The rooms, of which there were sometimes quite a number—some houses had as many as twenty—opened on to a central court containing an ornamental lake and water reserves. A handy staircase led to the rooms on the first floor. One of those on the ground floor served as the bathroom, with a terra-cotta or stone bath from which the water could be emptied by a clever pipe-work system.

Judging from the layout of the houses and funerary equipment found in its tombs, the people of Ugarit enjoyed quite a high standard of living. Even before its Mycenaean period, which was the richest and most prolific in works of art, Ras-Shamra had known a Phoenician period a century earlier, and this was no less interesting. The Phoenician level has revealed some remarkable objects, probably of native workmanship, but strongly influenced by Egypt. For influences followed one another in Ras-Shamra: Asia Minor's first, then Egypt's, and finally those of Aegean and Mycenaean art. In the Phoenician layer, M. Schaeffer found a particularly interesting seal which shows priests wearing animal masks and curious footwear probably intended to look like hooves. But stranger still was the group found in a house dating from the thirteenth century B.C.; two figures are in a chariot, itself quite complete, but of the horses, only a head remains. The terra-cotta figurines are dressed in Syrian style and in the treatment of their faces and long beards, they are quite different from anything occurring before them. Archaeologists and art scholars will have much to discuss before they can come to any agreement on this extraordinary work, which shows strongly characteristic Sumerian features, particularly in the eyes and brows, but belies them in the general workmanship of the statuettes, in their ethnic type, and in many details which space will not permit us to describe.

The remarkable discoveries of 1939 engendered general investigation of the palace and citadel of ancient Ugarit when war broke out and brought an end to archaeological work for nearly ten years. Fortunately it was possible for excavations to be resumed once again, and the campaigns of 1948, 1949 and 1950 in particular considerably widened the scope of our knowledge; this was mainly where the language and writing of the Ugaritians were concerned and in all aspects of the influences which, quite naturally in a centre of trade and traffic, were manifest in every sphere of life and culture.

Following up their investigations in the ruins of the fortress which had been cleared in 1939, French archaeologists found a huge fortified keep, similar to those already encountered in the "third

Troy", in Tiryns and Mycenae, whilst details of layout and construction brought Boghasköy and the Hittites to mind. In which direction did borrowing occur? Did the Syrians copy the Anatolians? Were the Hittites in this instance influenced by their neighbours once again? These questions are difficult ones to answer.

A weapon store was found in the area of the fortress and this contained arms and ammunition—arrows and sling-stones, and even more intriguing, bronze-scaled armour tunics. The scales were mounted exactly as on similar tunics found in such different places as Tepe Gawra and the tomb of Tutankhamen; those found on the latter site may have been sent by the Hittites or Ugaritians, for there were frequent relations between Ras-Shamra and Egypt.

The 1950 campaign made it possible to recognize these influences once again, for in a tomb under the casemates of the fortress, in the midst of some Mycenaean vases, there was a pyxis on which an Egyptian figure was represented holding an ansate cross—thereby demonstrating the eclectic character of Ugaritian civilization. Material civilization was also quite advanced, for a fairly complicated and elaborate sewage system had been laid under the subsoil of the town; remains of it were found in 1949 under the street which ran along the wall of the citadel. The pipes had water-tight connections with the main sewer, which was big enough for a man to stand up in it and was equipped with ventilation shafts and flushing outlets.

As Ugarit was for a long time occupied by the Egyptians, which the stele of Amenophis II has proved, the local troops, probably of Hurrian or Mitannian origin, were commanded for security reasons by Egyptian officers. It sometimes happened that insurrections broke out just as they did during the reign of Amenophis II; the famous stele gives testimony to this, relating how, in about 1444, the Pharaoh himself came to restore order in the city, which had risen against its foreign garrison.

Excavations have uncovered the evidence of a tragedy which overcame Ugarit in about 1360, dealing a terrible blow to the civilization of its people. What was the nature of the tragedy? We still do not know; all we can say is that Ugarit survived that date, though it had lost its prosperity, its prestige, its influence and its culture.

Clearance of the palace ruins has not yet been completed but it has been possible to work out its plan and the purpose of each of its rooms according to what was found in them: arrows, weapons and armour suggested the guard-room; stone benches and a well—a cool anteroom where visitors could await their audience; and styles and tablets—the office and chamber of archives. Under two

huge rooms which were perhaps the apartments of the king, there were royal burial vaults. They had unfortunately been plundered and contained nothing more than some gold and ivory remains, alabaster vases and some vessels painted in Mycenaean style.

The palace archives and library, which occupied several halls, preserved diplomatic correspondence and administrative documents. Commercial correspondence tablets were not so common, for they must have been kept in the merchant quarter where the goods brought by ships and caravans were received; there was little to be found in that area, which, as we might expect, was adjacent to the port of the city. On the other hand, excavations were carried out some years ago on the sacred archives of the temple of Baal and the House of the High Priest, which we shall discuss later. M. Virolleaud undertook the task of deciphering and publishing these Ugaritian texts and they provide the most varied information on the life of this great Syrian merchant city.

In 1949, whilst the buildings opposite the fortress were being cleared, in a heap of ashes testifying to the immense conflagration in which Ugarit, like so many other cities of the ancient East, had perished, a number of tablets was found; among these there was a discovery which has aroused much interest and discussion—a little tablet five centimetres long, bearing the characters of the old Ugaritian alphabet, the oldest alphabet known to the world.

In the range from the temples of Dagon and Baal to the humble dwellings of artisans, it is impossible to cover everything discovered in Ugarit; but because they are of such immense interest, we shall mention the library and the school for scribes. These were among M. Schaeffer's earliest finds on the site in 1930, and their contents did much to draw the interest of archaeologists and philologists to Ras-Shamra. As early as 1929, he had cleared the ruins of an important palace of the second millennium with Egyptian inscriptions and tablets bearing cuneiform characters. When he presented his discovery to the *Académie des Inscriptions*, M. Schaeffer underlined its importance by showing that the documents revealed a language previously quite unknown, and which was all the more interesting because it occurred in cuneiform lettering on several bronze pieces among a collection of seventy-four objects—weapons and implements. Before this, said M. Schaeffer, no bronze deposit of comparable size and quality had ever been found in the Orient.

The "library" of the school for scribes has yielded a considerable number of texts, of which the most valuable are those which provide us with dictionaries and bilingual lists. It is thought that they were used in teaching the priests and scribes who had to learn the different languages used in Ras-Shamra, together with their grammar

and particular method of writing. The task of these long-suffering students was complicated by the fact that six languages were used and they were probably compelled to know them thoroughly: first Sumerian, the chief religious language; Babylonian, which was used for diplomatic exchange; Egyptian, which was the tongue of one of the first conquerors of Syria; Hittite, which had supplanted Egyptian when the power of the Hatti replaced that of the Pharaohs; Phoenician, which was written in a language borrowed from the Cretans; and finally, an unknown language on which linguists have done a great deal of work—especially Charles Virolleaud of the Sorbonne, H. Bauer of Halle, and M. Thureau-Dangin of the *Institut national de France*. There are some intriguing details of the history of the Ras-Shamra texts and the reading difficulties to be encountered in them in J. Friedrich's *Ras-Shamra*.<sup>1</sup> These difficulties have been summarized by M. Contenau who finds evidence of the presence of the Hurri in the library of the scribes.<sup>2</sup> "From the objects found there and tablets with alphabetic characters derived from the cuneiform system, it is clear that the Phoenician population in this part of Syria underwent the dual influence of Egypt and Cyprus in particular in the course of the second millennium. None the less, some tablets written in customary cuneiform style have quite a different significance; when the Assyro-Babylonians (Accadians) needed a knowledge of Sumerian, the scribes were led to compose dictionaries in which every Sumerian term was explained by an Accadian one. The fullest of these dictionaries, called *Harra hubullu* (interest) after its first noun, was often recopied. During a late period there were even some transcriptions in Greek lettering. Now one of the Ras-Shamra tablets reproduces this dictionary, somewhat modified, but replacing Accadian by another unknown language which was seemingly spoken by an important part of the population. Both differences and similarities emerge from comparison of Tusratta's letter and the Ras-Shamra dictionary, so that having studied the texts, M. Thureau-Dangin does not venture to conclude that they are the same but he is fully convinced that they are related. Hrozný, on the other hand, recognizes Hurri in a Ras-Shamra inscription written in the cuneiform alphabet which we mentioned above—an inscription which gives a series of the names of Hurrian divinities. The Ras-Shamra tablets have provided another text written in the cuneiform alphabet, and this is extremely interesting although it presents so many difficulties. MM. Dhorme and Hrozný have suggested that it contains a reaction of the people of Ras-Shamra, or ancient Ugarit, against foreigners—the Hittites

<sup>1</sup> Leipzig, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> *La Civilisation des Hittites et des Mitanniens*, Paris, Payot, 1935, p. 95.

and Hurri, the people of Subartu, of Kadesh and Cyprus, and the Ionians with their king Nicomedes. M. Dussaud, in contrast, thinks that it deals with an alliance, and Mr. Albright rejects the suggestion that the texts include the Ionians. Nevertheless, though the relationship between these new elements and Ras-Shamra is not very clear, their existence at least is mentioned."

Ras-Shamra thus became a rich depository for objects of all kinds—works of art and a great wealth of written documents. Indeed, not only were dictionaries and bilingual lists found there but ledgers which merchants kept in their homes to maintain records of their profits; then there were historical texts, and poems in which ancient epics were preserved. Through these tablets we have increased our knowledge of the Ugaritians' religion, for these obscure but precious documents have given us the names of their gods: the goddess Anat and the god Alein, son of Baal, El-Hokmot the god of wisdom, Din-El and Dagon (whose temple contained superb vases and cult objects), Asharat and Ishtar—or Astarte, worshipped universally as the goddess of love and fertility. As for the epic of Taphon, it survives as one of the longest ancient texts (nearly 800 lines), and with the legend of Gilgamesh, which indeed it sometimes resembles, it is among the most interesting.

All these finds prove that Ras-Shamra was not only a rich and prosperous trading city but an outstanding cultural centre as well; and just as all the produce of the Mediterranean accumulated in its warehouses and bazaars, either to be re-exported or to meet local needs, so, in a town where six languages were in current use, the literary works and perhaps the religious beliefs of many peoples lived side by side and merged with one another.

Like so many other archaeological discoveries, the restoration of Mari was the outcome of a chance event. In May, 1933, a French officer passing through Syria was called upon by a native who asked him what he should do with the man he had found whilst unearthing some stones to cover a grave. The officer went with the native to the place he mentioned, which was called Tell Hariri, and there, half uncovered, he saw a statue; though it had unfortunately been defaced and had lost its head, it was easy to see that it was very old and very beautiful. The archaeological authorities in Syria were notified, and a few weeks after the find, work on clearing the tell began.

Tell Hariri is situated not far from the Euphrates, a short distance from the frontier between Syria and Iraq. Thus, if Mari belongs to Syria by virtue of its geographical position, aesthetically it derived its entire civilization from the culture and art of the Mesopotamians. Research there met with success, and important ruins were uncovered

from the debris of the tell. Labourers' picks cleared the walls of a temple and a palace as well as some statues. One of these was of King Lamgi Mari and it bore an inscription which made it possible for the site to be identified: the debris of Tell Hariri covered the ruins of ancient Mari.

Mari owed its great strategic and commercial importance to its position, and as early as the third millennium its political influence and its prosperity in trade were considerable. Though its name occurs in ancient texts, it was not previously possible to place it. André Parrot's excavations were soon to show what a valuable discovery this was and how archaeology was to be enriched by its treasures.

"From texts we knew of the city's existence and its primary rôle in the early part of the third millennium," writes M. Parrot. "As the centre of a kingdom which extended right up to the Persian Gulf, it continued to flourish unchallenged in its magnificence until the rôles of victor and vanquished were reversed. But if we had depended exclusively on the documents we knew before the excavations, we should never have been able to discover the degree of prosperity which this Semite city achieved. Its people were indeed Semites, and if they adopted Sumerian culture, they instilled it with the grace, subtlety and realism of an art which was their own." During the reign of Sargon of Agade, Mari became one of the outposts of his acquisitions in the north-west, and from there this great king extended his operations as far as Ashur and Subartu before proceeding to attack the Gutti in their mountains. In the course of centuries, Mari witnessed the passage of many peoples and races, armies on the march, the caravans of nomads and merchants, and shepherds with their flocks. The patriarchs Terah and Abraham passed through Mari on their way from Ur to Harran.

Aerial photographs taken by the methods of Père Poidebard reveal the importance of the ruins of Tell Hariri, especially those of the city and the palace which were built during the third millennium and destroyed by Hammurabi, the great king and law-giver of Babylon, in about 1800 B.C. Very huge and fortunately well preserved, the palace, as M. Parrot says, is "the most complete example of the oldest Mesopotamian architecture ever found". At the time when M. Parrot wrote this (1935), only a part of the palace had been uncovered, with more than half of the buildings still under earth and debris. In spite of this, an imposing structure, with seventy rooms and covering an area of 5,000 square metres has been cleared, and the sights we see there are very impressive ones.

The walls, which are in a very good state of preservation, have in some places remained as high as 5 or 6 metres, thereby enabling



the gateways to remain intact; wide and opening on to spacious courtyards, the gateways allowed plenty of air and light to reach those parts which were occupied. The purposes of these quarters have been accurately determined, either through their layout—the bathroom still had its brick and bitumen baths, the schoolroom its earth benches and vessels full of shells by which the children learnt to count—or by the quality of fittings which were still intact, like the kitchen in which an impressive array of jars remained unmoved together with a bread-oven and cheese-making equipment.

"Kings lived in this palace," writes M. Parrot, "and thanks to discoveries made this year, we know their names. In one little hall, which was a library, we collected more than 1,600 clay tablets dealing with the kingdom's finances. The more we study them, the more it appears to have been rich and powerful. Some documents found in the palace and deciphered by M. Thureau-Dangin give the following names: Ilumisar, Jahdub-Lim, Jagid-Lim, and Ishtup-Ilum—four princes of whose existence we were previously quite ignorant. Very probably they lived a little before Tura-Dagan and Puzur-Ishtar whose monuments were discovered by Koldewey at Babylon. They certainly belonged to the royal family which had the courage to resist Hammurabi."

Twice the law-giver king took possession of Mari and twice he burnt it. Walls made brown by the flames and beams burnt to cinders attest the fires which marked each Babylonian victory after wholesale plunder had left the ruins of the palace with objects which were valueless to the soldiers and invaluable to modern archaeologists. These were the clay statuettes and shell-plates which now tell us something of the style and tastes of Mari's inhabitants.

The comfort they contrived in their houses, where the walls quite often were decorated with blue and white spiral designs, is evidence of a civilization of some refinement—a civilization clearly related to the one we know from excavations at Ur and Khafaje which are both nearly 300 kilometres away. The statues are like those found by Frankfort at Tell Asmar. As for Mari's temple of Ishtar, it presents striking similarities with the oval temple of Khafaje. When we bear in mind that the dynasties of Mari and Khafaje covered the same periods, it does not seem surprising to find so many similarities between two areas which were strongly influenced by one another. It should nevertheless be observed that the plano-convex brick, which is the general distinguishing mark of the protodynastic periods, is nowhere to be seen in Mari. Seton Lloyd explains its absence by the fact that the plano-convex brick was probably introduced into Southern Mesopotamia by a mountain race accustomed to building with stones; it can be assumed that these

newcomers never went as far up as Mari, having been absorbed by the peoples of Lower Mesopotamia.<sup>1</sup>

As at Ur and Khafaje, the vast proportions of the buildings, the spaciousness of their halls and courts, the careful arrangements for study and bathing, and the perfect execution of all aspects of the architecture are a credit to the builders of Mari. The most outstanding item among the discoveries which M. Parrot made in 1935 is the huge statue of Ishtup-Illum: the only damage it had suffered was the loss of its nose when the Babylonian conquerors, not inclined to carry a weight of 500 kilos with them, were satisfied to pull it down from the sanctuary and roll it to the bottom of the staircase, where the archaeologists were fortunate enough to find it. It is a powerful and imposing work, in which the curious, sensual grace manifest in the statues of the temple of Ishtar is lacking; but the vigour of its relief, the muscular concentration which musters all its strength in bold foreshortening, the treatment of the beard and the violent stylization of the face entitle this royal image to be compared with any masterpiece of Sumerian art.

M. Parrot's excavations in 1936 added a great deal to what we know. They were mostly concentrated on the temple of Ishtar and the palace—which had only been imperfectly cleared before this. Operations in the temple established the presence of four superimposed sanctuaries. The topmost, or most recent one, goes back to the third dynasty of Ur; this was the one destroyed by Hammurabi's invasion. Beneath these ruins were those of a pre-Sargonid temple with a double court and double cellar; this was probably destroyed by Eannadu, king of Lagash, in 2850 B.C. The third temple (starting from the top layer of the tell) had only one cella and one court—the latter embellished with a six-columned portico. The cylinders of the Farra type which were found there have enabled M. Parrot to place the period of construction as *circa* 3000 B.C. The fourth temple had a similar layout but was much older. Even lower than this there was a small sanctuary of Ishtar which contained votive statues, cylinders, foundation nails, and so on.

In the palace whose first occupant was king Zimri-Lim, son of Jahdub-Lim, during the period when Mari was being laid waste by Hammurabi's invasion, excavations in 1936 cleared parts of it which were unknown until then, and among these were sixty rooms—bringing the number discovered to 138; we are still unable to say how many additional rooms will be brought to light by further operations. The palace had two storeys, the ground floor probably being reserved for the royal kitchens, stores and privies. Among the architectural finds of 1936, the most important was a large rectan-

<sup>1</sup> Seton Lloyd, *Mesopotamia*, London, 1936, p. 58.

gular court, the walls of which were originally covered with frescoes. Unfortunately a number of them fell down; a corridor led to another and even larger court, from which a semi-circular stairway went up to a cella also covered with paintings.

These paintings provide us with excellent specimens of Marian art. Not only are there imitations of polychrome marble with a winding border such as we find in the court, but real compositions; in a treed landscape coloured by real and fantastic animals, we witness a gathering of gods and goddesses. The most beautiful section represents the goddess Ishtar, armed like Minerva and crushing a lion at her feet, as she offers the king his insignia of power. Other scenes divided into panels depict mythical or religious events, ceremonies and sacrifices.

As we said, the sculpture shows many affinities with Sumerian art; none the less this would be an inadequate basis for suggesting that the artists of Mari showed no originality at all. Far from this, the votive statues are strangely alive and the female images are sometimes delightfully graceful and curiously engaging. This is thought to reflect the character of a people who were far more in the grip of ceremonial and rites than the Sumerians—attaching more importance to the observation of real life and to naturalistic interpretation; the cake and cheese moulds are particularly enlightening in this respect for they attest a popular domestic art in which animals, for example, are portrayed with a realism which is quite unaffected and spontaneous.

Of course, it was the temple of Ishtar which contained most statues and these were ex-voto offerings in which the worshipper had himself represented in an attitude of adoration and prayer. Most of these images were found mutilated for the invaders who did this believed that this would put an end to any effect they might have in being there. The actual purpose of the votive statue was to replace the worshipper in the divinity's holy place; through the image he was always present and the god would not fail to protect him, for every day he could witness how zealously he paid homage. Of necessity the statues had to show a likeness for this purpose and clearly indicate by whom they had been offered; thus, as in every instance where the effigy was a substitute and not a representation, the extent to which it was true to life played an important part. We can accordingly take it that the statues of the Marian kings were completely faithful as portraits, as were those of Gudea, for example, and that in the very act of mutilating them, those who did this sought to deprive them of their religious power: they shattered the heads and the worshippers became unrecognizable; they broke away the hands and the act of worship was obliterated.

The large statue of the goddess Ishtar, which was found in 1936, is of a very different style; here we are confronted by art which is hieratical, huge and awe-inspiring. The simplicity of the body's relief, and the commanding nobility of the face—as affecting as those of ancient Greek statues—link it with the supreme masterpieces of religious art in any time or country. This image proves that if the artists of Mari excelled in interpreting the scenes of everyday life, they could also express the sublime peace of godhead, the mystery of the natural forces of love and fertility, in a female image which was as magnificent in its own way as the Demeters of Greece.

The common and readily ironical aspect of Marian art emerges pre-eminently in the shell mosaic which is similar to the famous “standard of Ur”. This meticulously wrought and subtle work of art represents a warlike scene, probably the triumphant march past of the king followed by his prisoners and warriors. The workmanship is delicate and exact, and the alternation of the colouring—the mother of pearl of the shells, the background of bitumen and the frame of red stone—and the finish of the engraving, which skilfully high-lights the costumes, facial expressions, the details of weapons, ornamentation and harness, make this a work equal in importance to the shell mosaics found in Mesopotamia.

“The last secret which the palace held in store for us was in the hall of archives,” writes André Parrot.<sup>1</sup> “Several thousand tablets were scattered over the ground and occupied the wall-cupboards of the room. . . . The number of inscribed documents collected at Mari can be assessed at about twenty thousand. Through these thousands of letters received in court, all Mesopotamia seems restored to life; famous and unknown actors take the stage, some in major, some in minor rôles, kings, commanders-in-chief, and high functionaries. Now the full chapter dealing with the establishment of Babylonian supremacy at the beginning of the second millennium B.C. can be written. Side by side with charming incidents from lesser history appears the dramatic sequence of events ending at Mari in the scene of the palace's destruction by fire.”

<sup>1</sup> An historical account of the successive discoveries at Mari will be found in André Parrot's *Archéologie Mésopotamienne*, vol. 1, *Les Etapes*, published by Albin Michel, 1946.

“Thus, Shiptu, wife of King Zimrilim, and hence Queen of Mari, with tender solicitude urges her lord and master to keep himself well covered up during the journey he is undertaking, so as not to catch cold. Moreover, like any other dutiful and loving wife, she sends him some warm clothing.” André Parrot, *Découverte des Mondes ensevelis*, 1952. Five volumes containing part of the royal archives of Mari were published by the Imprimerie Nationale, which is publishing all of these documents.

Mari's power and splendour were eclipsed after this tragedy; it became a quiet little city without pride, prestige or ambition, and it would long have remained unknown but for some Arabs who, in 1933, came looking for stones to build a tomb for one of their number and chanced to find the statue which placed archaeologists on the track of the magnificent ancient capital. Barely twenty-five years have passed since the happy chance which led to this discovery, but thanks to the scholarship and expeditious work of André Parrot, and to the enthusiasm of those who worked with him, Mari is now as famous as Ur or Nineveh.

The frescoes representing curious religious ceremonies or state receptions in the palace (in the Louvre Museum), and many magnificent statues (excellently reproduced in the fine volume on Mari published by André Parrot in the *Editions Ides et Calendes*, Neuchâtel, 1953), reveal the kings, priests and court functionaries, with their curly beards, their lamb or goat fleece *kaunakes*, and their hands together in an attitude of prayer and veneration. Some statuettes of women were also found, with huge hips and ample bosoms: these are images of the mother-goddess and bringer of fertility; and there are some who carry vases from which holy water flows—effigies of the Mother of All Life, without whom men, animals and even plants would die. The image of the "great singing woman" Ur Nanshe, which was found in 1952 in the temple of Ishtar, can be included among the most delightful and characteristic works of Mari's art to be discovered in recent years. Such was the achievement of sculptors who, in the third millennium before Christ, were skilled in the handling of stone, marble and alabaster. Their favourite subject was Ishtar who, as we know, was the goddess of love; at Mari, however, she assumed an individual character which we never find anywhere else: she became "virile Ishtar", contradictory though this may seem, and she now watched over war as well as the pleasures of love.

In spite of the fury to which Hammurabi's soldiers gave vent in sacking and destroying Mari, a splendid collection of statues and statuettes has been made from the ruins of its temples and palaces. There are also the foundation deposits of the ancient ziggurat (cleared in 1952), and the bronze lions of the temple of Dagan, which were found crushed under the debris of the sanctuary, were restored with immense care and patience, and are now one of the splendid exhibits of the Louvre. The temple of Ninhursag, the temple of Dagan, the temple of Ishtar and the palace of the kings have now been fully cleared, but the site is far from exhausted and we must hope that the political situation in the Middle East, so uncertain and therefore unfavourable to archaeological work, will

permit the excavations of those parts of the town which have been mapped and identified.

The savage onslaught of the Babylonians brought a sudden and tragic end for the inhabitants of Mari and this has proved a boon to those engaged in research, for some of the rooms in the palaces and temples have thereby revealed the way of life of the people of the city. "One room was equipped as a kitchen. Constructed of fire-clay, with places for the cauldrons and openings for fireplaces, it could have been put into use at once. Nor would dishes be lacking since there was a 'table-service' of almost fifty pieces, hollow vessels of varying shape and decoration, which must have been used for preparing and serving cheese and milk products."<sup>1</sup>

In 1951, excavations in a more recent burial-ground (for it only dated from the Assyrian occupation in the first millennium B.C.) led to the unearthing of curiously shaped terra-cotta coffins—like cigars or walnut-shells. It was sometimes held sufficient to place two large jars mouth to mouth and these would accommodate a corpse provided that it was not too big; in the latter event, the legs were bent so that its strange sarcophagus would hold it. These tombs were probably the resting-places of soldiers of the Assyrian regiments which were garrisoned at Mari, protecting the bridgehead on the Euphrates and the caravan-route from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean. In these military graves, it was customary to place the weapons of the dead man—his bow and arrows—as well as things he might use in everyday life and vessels containing food and drink.

During the period when Mari was strong and independent, the mode of burial was not very different from what it became under the Assyrian occupation; coffins were always of terra-cotta, with jars or vats holding curled-up bodies. A rather strange way of burying children is nevertheless to be observed: they were placed under the flooring of houses, gathered in a corner at the foot of a wall; this leads us to wonder whether they were placed there as ritual sacrifices to ensure that the buildings were strong and lasting. Vases were used for these little bodies; they were large enough to hold the tiny remains and were covered with nothing more than a dish or plate.

The texts found in the "library" are as precious to the archaeologist as they are to the linguist. More than fifteen thousand tablets with cuneiform lettering have so far been deciphered and these belonged to the diplomatic correspondence of King Zimri-Lim, the last to reign over Mari.

El Mishrife, the site of ancient Quatna, is near Homs and almost

<sup>1</sup> André Parrot, *Découverte des mondes ensevelis*; English translation published by SCM Press in 1955 with the title *Discovering Buried Worlds*.

halfway between Damascus and Aleppo. It was a very important city, first excavated by Count du Mesnil du Buisson and the source of some very valuable documents.<sup>1</sup> This research proved that there was frequent intercourse between Quatna and Egypt; among other things, Count du Mesnil du Buisson found a sphinx bearing a dedicatory inscription to princess Ita, daughter of King Amenemhat II of the twelfth dynasty. There was a great deal of pottery and it proved informative. The ruins yielded evidence of a Hittite city and a Hurri city, the latter being characteristically square in layout. The Hurris were invaders, possibly from Armenia or an area neighbouring the kingdom of the Mitanni. From their name it would seem that they were the "cave-people", and this linguistic evidence has been taken as a basis for the theory that they came from Nimrud-Dagh, in the region of Urfa, where caves are numerous.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century B.C., Quatna, having rejected an alliance with the Hittites, was destroyed by their King Subbiluliuma (or Suppiluliuma, as it is also written). It was in the ruins resulting from this devastation that du Mesnil du Buisson found the remains of the palace and the temple of Mishrife, both of which proved very important. We cannot go into details about them here; we shall merely refer to what is probably the most valuable discovery ever made at Mishrife—a library which contained, among other documents, the inventory of the treasure of the gods and another inventory, that of the treasure of the Lady Nin-Egal, Lady of Quatna; this made it possible to identify Mishrife with the ancient city. "They are written in Accadian," says M. Contenau, "and they mention gold, lapis lazuli and crystal ex-votos (not bronze, copper or silver ones; some objects of iron set in gold, for iron at that time was a rarity); but some terms of Hurri origin occur on the tablets as well as Asianic proper nouns."

We are also indebted to du Mesnil du Buisson for the discovery of Suran, where he cleared a Mitannian city dating from the middle of the second millennium. We are beginning to have quite detailed knowledge of the kingdom of Mitanni; it was a curious country, inhabited by a race of Indo-European origin. It has been observed with some surprise that the names of its gods were none other than those of the Hindu deities, Mitra, Varuna and Indra, and that people also had Hindu-sounding names. The history of the Mitannians was quite a splendid one, particularly during the second millennium, when we see them conquer Assyria and present Egypt with some grave problems until she saw that it was wisest to make an alliance with them. Relations between the two powers were so friendly that the kings of Mitanni often gave their daughters to the

<sup>1</sup> *Les Ruines d'El Mishrife*, du Mesnil du Buisson, Paris.

pharaohs in marriage. The Hittites also made certain of the friendship of the Mitannians until an attack from Assyria put an end to their prosperity. The ruins of Suran give an accurate impression of what a Mitannian city was like towards the middle of the second millennium.

In 1930, at Khan-Sheikhoun, Count du Mesnil du Buisson discovered a tell containing the remains of six cities which were superimposed on one another; two dated from the bronze age (beginning of the second millennium) and four from the iron age (between the tenth and the fourth centuries B.C.). Not far from there, in the necropolis of Tell-As, he uncovered a large number of bronze vessels dating from 3000 to 1500 B.C.

At Shagar Bazar, which was only discovered in 1934, not six but fifteen cities were found superimposed on one another, and this was enough to make the site one of the most valuable sources of information for the archaeologist. Shagar Bazar is situated in the region of the Habur in north-eastern Syria, halfway between the Tigris and Euphrates. From the very earliest times, the position of this city enabled it to command the ways connecting the two rivers as well as the caravan routes from the Mediterranean coast to the country's interior and those going down from Asia Minor towards Assyria.

As we might have expected in such a very important region, a large number of tells exist in the desert, which is crossed by the course of the Habur. The expedition led by E. I. Mallowan left from the point where the Habur joins the Euphrates at Circesium, and moved north, marking the position of the tells on the way, each of which concealed the ruins of an ancient city. Brief surveys sometimes indicated the traces of occupation in prehistoric times and sometimes ruins from the Hellenist or Assyrian periods. Unfortunately it was impossible to clear all of these mounds, though each of them contained valuable relics of the past, graves, houses, temples and palaces. As in all West Asia, the tells were scattered with the remains of pottery, and these became increasingly interesting as Shagar Bazar grew nearer. It was undoubtedly such an important cultural centre that from the top of the tell of Shagar Bazar, Mr. Mallowan was on one occasion able to recognize forty tells in the area; and forty tells meant forty cities.

Shagar Bazar's mound is sixty feet high; it is the tallest of those marking out the stages of the great trade route and it thus promised the explorers a rich reward of remains. They were not disappointed in their hopes when surveys indicated that it had been occupied by fifteen settlements, the oldest of which went back to the neolithic age or, at the latest, to the beginning of the chalcolithic or eneolithic period.



The history of Shagar Bazar, like so many sites in Mesopotamia, Palestine and Egypt, is related through its pottery. The earliest chalcolithic or eneolithic settlement, beneath which there is virgin soil, contained, according to Mr. Mallowan, "early specimens of the painted pottery of Tell Halaf and Samara, and provided us with some remarkable examples of a fired and incised pottery, similar to the ware found on the coast of Syria and at Sakje Geuzi. This pottery's importance lies in the fact that it proves that Mediterranean man was among the first occupants of the Habur. The quality of this pottery surpasses that of any other Syrian ceramic ware in the perfection of its firing and its immaculately polished surface; only Malta's earliest pottery, usually referred to as neolithic, can be compared to it and this may have been imported into the island from Syria."

As the successive layers of the tell were cleared, new towns appeared—towns destroyed by invasions or worn away by the elements, which soon get the better of houses built of earth and mud. There is nothing easier than building a new city with the ruins of the old one as foundation. The ten oldest layers of the tumulus are regarded as belonging to prehistoric times, but in them can be recognized the constant progress made by the potter in his art and technique. Each layer yields pottery of greater delicacy, of finer workmanship and decoration, though hand-making had not yet given place to the wheel; this was not to happen until the tenth city when for the first time we see its results in polychrome ware. Apart from the vessels just described, the prehistoric period also yielded some striking and very intriguing primitive statuettes representing the mother-goddess, probably the goddess of fertility. Contemporary with these figurines was a cylinder showing a procession—a dance of men with birds' heads, doubtless representing masked priests.

The change of civilization is so complete when we reach the tenth layer that it can only be explained by a change of population; we must assume that the alien farmers who came down from their mountains in about 4000 B.C. and settled in the Habur valley were driven from it by new occupants who forced them from their lands and sent them back where they came from. Mr. Mallowan's theory, at all events, is that after they left, Shagar Bazar was abandoned and only reoccupied some centuries later. The eleventh settlement does in fact contain a burial-ground with skeletons differing in race from those of the ten earlier cities. These people knew how to use copper, and with the wheel they produced a pottery which was quite different from any type preceding it. Its forms are pleasing and some of the grey clay vessels incised with designs borrowed from basketry originals betoken a much more advanced

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civilization than that of the third millennium. The graves contain objects similar to those which distinguish the Sargonid graves in the royal cemetery of Ur and those of Nineveh; the people who were living in Shagar Bazar during this period knew the use of metals and how to make weapons and jewellery from them. Objects of this kind make it possible to attribute the graves to about 2700 B.C.

The grey pottery with incised design, one of the characteristic features of the historic period of Shagar Bazar, persists through the later layers up to 1800 B.C. Towards that date, new upheavals destroyed the town again. The fourteenth settlement, in which the progress of civilization had led to a sounder and more subtle architectural technique (wall bases were now made of stone) and to a style of tombs with overhanging vaults, disappeared, probably as the result of a war, and Shagar Bazar was left unoccupied once again. Wars followed one another and the Habur valley saw the passage of the Mitannian, Hittite and Assyrian armies: in a country which had become a battleground and where a new enemy appeared daily, peaceful settlement was no longer possible. In the course of more than a millennium the houses which had been abandoned fell in ruins; time completed the work of destruction which conquerors had started. From 1500 to Roman times, no one came to build over the remains of the ancient city; but then, for reasons we have been unable to discover, Shagar Bazar was reborn—new houses arose, colonists settled in a territory which had remained uninhabited for more than ten centuries, and then again, after savage destruction, ruins obliterate the image of the Roman city. Moslems passed through without lingering; but they dug several tombs, in which, to the great astonishment of the explorers of 1935, there were silver objects bearing the signature of Hans Krauwinkel, a goldsmith of Nürnberg. What curious changes of fortune could have brought these things into a Mohammedan grave at Shagar Bazar in the Habur Valley? Perhaps a novelist's imagination could provide the answer; the archaeologist must content himself by recording that they were there, and marvelling how the history of the tell, beginning in the dim remoteness of the neolithic age, comes to an end in the seventeenth century A.D., with 20 metres and fifteen cities to separate the first efforts of the unknown artist of the fourth millennium from the Franconian workmanship which the vagaries of trade and freaks of chance (affecting objects as well as men) brought to the uppermost layer of a Syrian tumulus.

"The Byblos excavations," writes Charles Virolleaud,<sup>1</sup> "started in 1921 and the subject of so much discussion throughout the world, have brought a number of facts to light from which the following

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence syrienne*, May, 1930.

most important one emerges: from earliest antiquity (the thirtieth or thirty-fifth century B.C.) Byblos was having relations with Egypt. Some objects were found at Byblos (alabaster and diorite vases in particular) which bear the names of some of the earliest pharaohs of the Memphian kingdom—Unas, Pepi II, Mycerinus and even the name of Eha-Shekem, the first king of Egypt to unite the upper and lower valley of the Nile under his rule."

Today we are led to wonder whether the cult of Osiris was of Syrian origin. The most typical of Egypt's gods is indeed curiously like Adonis, who was worshipped at Byblos. "Tradition," writes Gordon Childe, "says that Osiris had taught the Egyptians agriculture and links him curiously with Byblos; cult invested him with the shepherd's crook and the ploughman's goad; his personality is in any case reminiscent of an Asiatic vegetation deity. As his human shape is in contrast to the totemic animal deities of the Nile, so the economic system which he represents is far ahead of the African hunting or garden culture. In any case, despite some ambiguities in the tradition its interpretation leaves no doubt as to a former political supremacy of the north over the south. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The belief in a god who dies and is restored to life is not linked solely with a religious interpretation of a solar myth. It cannot be fully explained by associating it with the regular floods of the Nile from which Egypt derives its fertility, and it is very likely that at least some of the characteristics of Osiris were borrowed from the Syrian Adonis whose capital was at Byblos. The myth of spring played a very important part in ancient times. It was associated with the cult of Astarte, representing earth and nature; the death and resurrection of Osiris, like the death and resurrection of Adonis and the myths surrounding the figure of Dionysos, make up one of the profoundest, most stirring and beautiful mysteries to be found in ancient thought, for they stem from a very high idea on which an entire conception of human life is based, and which perpetuates the primordial rites of vegetation.

The importance of Byblos chiefly resides in the fact that in ancient times it was Syria's centre of trade with Egypt; she exploited the forests of Lebanon and it was to Egypt that their wood was mainly exported. The wood of Byblos was so renowned that the Egyptian name of the city, *Kepen*, became the general term in the Egyptian language for a boat, which was called *kepenit*, that is—*made from the wood of Byblos*. Thanks to its cedar forests, Syria became one of the richest commercial centres in the ancient world. Egypt needed timber for all kinds of things but especially for building her temples, and she paid a high price for anything she bought in Syria. There is

<sup>1</sup> *New Light on the Most Ancient East*, Kegan Paul, London, 1934.

an interesting text which tells of the travels and misfortunes of a priest of Amun who had been sent by his powerful brotherhood to transact the purchase of some beams from the Giblites or inhabitants of Byblos. The story, told in a delightfully simple style by Wenamon, the unfortunate messenger, demonstrates the arrogance of the princes of Byblos, who knew that their neighbours depended on them, made them pay through the nose and showed little respect for such distinguished personages as the priests of Amun, who in Egypt were a powerful and dreaded aristocracy. The story of Wenamon's journey is written on the El Hibeh papyrus, which was discovered in 1891 by peasants of Upper Egypt, is now in Russia and was deciphered by Professor Golenischev. Without affectation and with much charm and humour, it conveys the economic relations which existed between the kingdom of the pharaohs and the princes of Byblos.

Byblos, indeed, owed all its prosperity to the export of timber. Gordon Childe tells us,<sup>1</sup> "Egypt's need of timber made Byblos a city. The relations between Egyptians and Giblites seem to have been thoroughly amicable. The Egyptians consorted thither as traders not conquerors, bringing alabaster vases, jewellery, and perishable goods in exchange for the cedars of Lebanon. Some probably settled; in any case they paid prolonged visits. They taught the Giblites the Egyptian hieroglyphic script and introduced the cult of some Egyptian gods. Egyptian sculptors eventually came to execute the bas-reliefs for the local temple. Byblos thus became a new seat of industrial and commercial life with its own demands for metals and precious stones; the satisfaction of that demand would make it a new focus for diffusion."

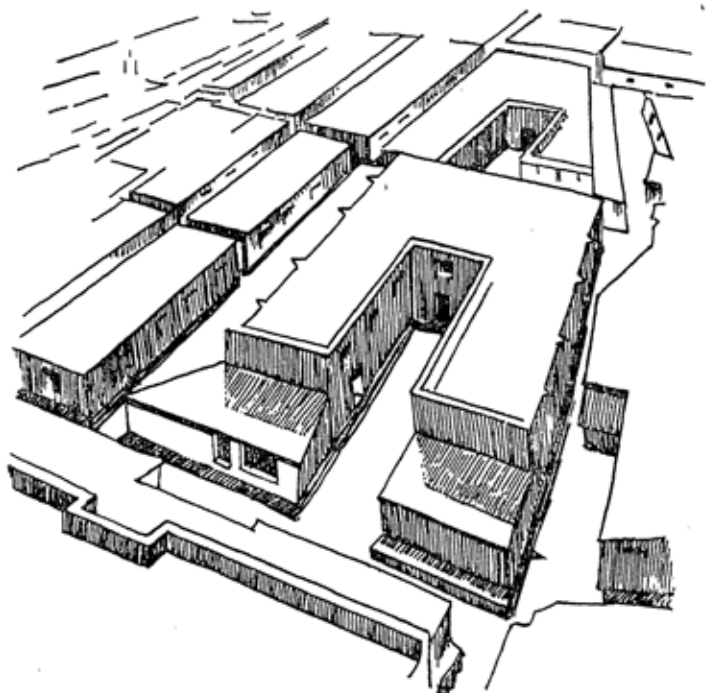
The temple of Adonis was naturally the main building of Byblos. Unfortunately it was damaged and altered so many times in the course of the centuries from its foundation in remote antiquity up to Roman times, that it is very difficult, even though we have now rediscovered its ruins, to gain any definite idea of what it originally looked like. Maurice Dunand found a large temple which was at first a sanctuary of the fourth millennium; this was later destroyed and rebuilt several times over. In it were discovered weapons, vases, jewels and a large stone statue which had been made locally but still showed the influence of Egyptian art. M. Dunand summarized his work in a report to the *Académie des Inscriptions*: "Forty metres of the ramparts found by earlier excavations were cleared. On the inside they were strengthened with buttresses and on the outside with a huge clay embankment. On the basis of a survey, it has been estimated that the perimeter of the ramparts should reach 1,000 to

<sup>1</sup> *New Light on the Most Ancient East*, Kegan Paul, 1934.

1,500 metres in length. Some foundation deposits were discovered close by and sometimes built in. These were large jars which were found to contain the remains of children five years old. This is the most typical example revealed through excavation of the foundation sacrifices described in the Book of Kings, which mentions how Hiel of Jericho sacrificed his son under the walls of the city in order to win the favour of the deity."

It should be remembered that the bodies of children were also found in Palestine and Mesopotamia, thereby proving to what extent a barbarous custom dating back to the darkness of the "age of miracles" was generally accepted. In the course of research, many Phoenician inscriptions have been brought to light and others drawn up with characters hitherto unknown. This composite method of writing is sometimes related to Egyptian hieroglyphics and sometimes to certain letters of the Phoenician alphabet. M. Dunand concludes that, probably alphabetical and still retaining some determinatives and possibly syllables, it was one of the earliest attempts at phonetic writing; in all likelihood, it dates from the period of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, and this could be seen as confirmation of the theory attributing an Egyptian origin to the formation of the Phoenician alphabet. This is now strongly contested by those who adduce forceful arguments to maintain that the alphabet was invented by the Cretans.

Ties with Crete were freshly confirmed by Sir Leonard Woolley's discoveries at Mina. If Byblos was the great wood-exporting port, Mina, not far from Antioch, must have been the centre of the pottery trade, for large amounts of it were found there. In Greek tradition, Mina was known as Poseidon or Posidium and alleged to have been founded by a hero. It was undoubtedly an important cultural centre in the second millennium and its ties with Crete were very close ones, as a comparison of local and Minoan pottery will attest. Mina, furthermore, did not restrict itself to exporting the produce of its workshops; in the stores which have been discovered, goods were carefully classified in special warehouses, depending on whether they were being exported or imported, whether they were from abroad or from internal trade. The harbours, wharves and docks discovered by Sir Leonard Woolley are now seen as evidence of a port of major importance. They were constantly being improved, enlarged and altered, and it has been shown that the wharves were rebuilt seven times between 1600 and 400 B.C. The hinterland of Mina also had its share in the work and wealth of the city. In the Syrian plain which all evidence would suggest was economically dependent on the great port, the English archaeologist says that he

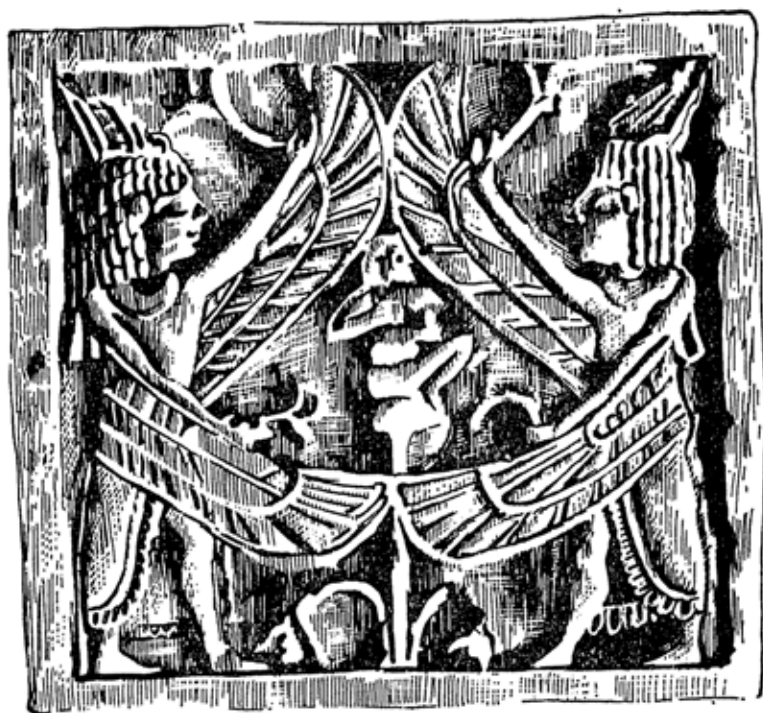


*Fig. 22 Reconstruction of the stores of Mina*

found trace of a hundred ancient cities which are still waiting to be explored.

Mina's position at the mouth of the River Orontes fixed its destiny as a great centre of exchange between Crete and Cyprus, with which she had very important maritime trade, and with the regions of the interior where her caravans travelled as far as Aleppo, Nineveh, Babylon and Carchemish. Mina's foreign trade relations altered as centuries passed; here as elsewhere, potsherds teach us the country's political and economic history. Layer 8, for example, shows the mark of a veritable Cypriot pottery invasion, completely displacing Helladic pottery and its geometric motifs; so great was the new influence on local art that vases have been found which were obviously made at Mina with its own clay, but borrowing Cypriot forms and embellishments.

Vessels with geometric motifs reappear in layer 7 then completely disappear once more in layer 6, where the pottery of Rhodes, Corinth and Naucratis becomes dominant. Athenian trade having come into the ascendant at Mina in layer 5, Attic style supplants all others.



*Fig. 23 Ivory from Arslan Tash, showing Horus on the lotus*

And so it goes on: each period shows the origin of Mina's imports and indicates the markets on which its attention was now focused. Until the foundation of Seleucia, which absorbed the major part of Mina's trade, the ancient port on the Orontes maintained its importance. It was to win it back again later on when Seleucia was destroyed by earthquakes and the ships of the islands once more weighed anchor in Posidium; during the period of the Crusades it recaptured all the bustle and excitement it had known when the Duchy of Antioch established a base for its naval fleets in the bay known as Port of Saint-Simeon.

The composite character which we have shown to be a main element of Giblete art was common to all the art of Syria; from Jezireh—where clearance of the palace of Teglath Phalazar revealed enamels, ornamentations in which Egyptian themes are curiously treated in Phoenician style—to Sefireh, or ancient Shipri, in the area of Aleppo—one of the most important cities in the kingdom of Mitanni and the site of a fortress of the second millennium where

Egyptian influence is strangely allied with that of Mesopotamia—all Syria is possessed by the same eclectic, syncretic and assimilative spirit. Blends of this kind occur again at Arslan-Tash, which was founded by Teglath-Phalazar, King of Assyria, in the second half of the eighth century B.C. Excavations conducted by M. Thureau Dangin, M. Dossin and Père Barrois have cleared the entire enclosure wall of the city, the palace, and the temple; this contains some splendid sculpture in Hittite style but not without reminders of Egyptian and Mesopotamian influence as well. Arslan-Tash, which means Rock of the Lion, is in the plain of Seruj, not far from Jerablus on the Euphrates. It was a dependency of Hittite civilization. Work on the site has uncovered houses containing everything we now call modern comfort and a palace which by itself would provide ample proof of the importance and wealth of a city which was made the pivot of Assyrian activities in Syria. It was there that Père Barrois discovered a magnificent collection of ivory tablets. What is most intriguing about these ivories is that their mainly Phoenician style keeps company with both Egyptian and Aegean themes.

The same blend of style in local work, under the influence of foreign objects which stand side by side in tombs with the original creations of native artists, appears in the discoveries made at Minet el Beida. It was in this port, and as far back as 1929 that M. Schaeffer discovered a cemetery of the second millennium, "containing, in addition to eighty ceramic deposits, a wealth of statuettes of Phoenician deities in bronze, set off with gold and silver, golden jewels and hard stones, which were of great historical value; among these were Teshub the great god, and Astarte the goddess of fertility. A number of princely tombs like vaulted underground cellars, with stairs and a corridor giving access, though they had been profaned in ancient times, still contained a collection of valuable pottery, vases of Egyptian alabaster, gold beads, and most important of all, a carving on ivory representing a female deity with her trunk bare and sitting on a throne with a goat on either side; this is undoubtedly the most beautiful Mycenaean ivory so far discovered." Further excavations have confirmed the importance of this city, which was the focal point of the copper imports arriving on ships from Cyprus in the second millennium. M. Schaeffer found more than four hundred votive deposits which included weapons, jewels and vases of many different regions. Just as at Ras-Shamra, the produce of the Aegean, of Crete and Egypt had accumulated there. Minoan rhytons are to be seen with flasks and rouge boxes of Egyptian style, painted hydriae from Rhodes, and jewels of gold, amethyst and cornelian. According to M. Schaeffer, who bases his theory on the fact that there were no weapons, and



that articles for feminine use were in the majority, the richest of these deposits, containing nearly a thousand vessels, all of exquisite workmanship and for the most part undamaged, was probably a collection of offerings dedicated to a priestess of the thirteenth century B.C. The library containing many legal, historical, political and literary documents also dates from this period.

Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations at Tell Atchana on the middle Orontes produced Minoan pottery dating from about 1700 B.C. This discovery, the source of some very valuable documents, demonstrates how deeply Cretan civilization had made its inroads in the course of the second millennium, for it affected not only the coastal cities of Syria but a city remote in the interior and separated from the coast by the Amanus Mountains; here, native craftsmen reproduced the style and themes of the artists of Knossos.

Centuries passed but in the Syrian ruins of the Roman period, the same composite and eclectic character can still be recognized. At Dura-Europos, on the Euphrates, one of the most remarkable melting-pots of the ancient world, the same tendency persists, blending styles and religions, and yet infusing its borrowings with a character so completely original that what it created from them was something new and personal. The same thing happened at Baalbeck, where the architectural and decorative themes brought there by Greece and Rome were transposed in a spirit which was genuinely Syrian; at Palmyra, where the colonial style contains so many borrowings and so much originality; and at Petra, the city of rose-red tombs and temples, and one of the most remarkable creations of Syrian genius, where the power with which it could develop and transform matched its ability to absorb.

Petra is situated at the confluence of several civilizations, between the southern extremity of the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba on the Red Sea. Historically and aesthetically it has been dependent on Syria, Palestine and Arabia, and each of these contrasting elements has been blended in its style. It owed its prosperity to its position on the incense route coming from southern Arabia; it was also on the route from Alexandria to Seleucia. During the Nabataean period it possessed more than thirty thousand inhabitants, and Strabo says that the camel caravans crossing their country were like armies on the march. The rose-red city has remained a mystery despite the many archaeological expeditions which have explored it. Research by Mr. George Horsfield, Director of Antiquities in Jordan, has established the very great age of the settlements which followed one another on the site. Sir Alexander Kennedy has recorded over a thousand monuments there from the most different periods. As a relic of the bronze age, which is the Edomite period (about 1500 B.C.),

there is a large, circular, megalithic temple, similar to the circle of Marib in the Yemen, dedicated to the moon-god, and to the huge walls of Ain Shems in Palestine. The Nabataeans replaced the Edomites during an indeterminate period. A royal cemetery of theirs has been found, and although this was pillaged it still preserves some figures of the sun-god Dusares. The emblem of Dusares is a square stone block. The high-place, with its sacrificial tables and horned altars, stood on the mountain of Zibb Atuf. In spite of these discoveries, the Nabataeans remain an enigma. We know practically nothing of their religion or customs. Petra makes her entry into historical times from the period of her resistance to Antigonos, one of Alexander's generals, but everything points to the fact that her existence reaches back long before the coming of the Greeks.

Whoever wishes to know something about Palmyra and its importance as a city in the evolution of ancient civilization will find a great amount of literature on it, but to my mind, the most useful work is Theodor Wiegand's *Palmyra*<sup>1</sup>; this gives an accurate picture of the discoveries made by French and German expeditions on the site, which has remained, since Volney's time, the typical example of a dead city. Like Baalbek and Dura-Europos, Palmyra was a great cross-roads for influences, where Greece, Rome and the East met one another. Just as the gods of Asia sometimes became European in form, so Zeus became Baalsamin.

Wiegand and his colleagues end this discussion on the influences which were dominant in Palmyra by emphasizing the pre-eminence of Rome as it appears in architecture (use of the vault, road labour), in chronology, metrology, and the fundamental features of its art. Depending on the standpoint from which one approaches Palmyra's monuments, sculpture and painting, one is tempted to stress the genius of Rome or the genius of the east, for they seem to have collided with one another rather than collaborated.

The fairest opinion seems to be that of M. E. Pottier<sup>2</sup> when he writes, "To my mind we have been looking for the truth within time limits which are too narrow. We must leave the Greek and Roman worlds behind us and go back much further. From the very beginning, Greek Ionia received and blended the materials and themes of Egypt, Crete and Asia; she brought them together and transformed them. The art of Achaemenid Persia emerged fully in the sixth century B.C., and the Greco-Oriental tradition persisted throughout the period of Hellenism. At the end of the Republic, and especially under the Empire, Rome intervened and left her strong mark on everything. But the palaces of Susa and

<sup>1</sup> Berlin, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue archéologique*, 1933.

Persepolis remain the ancestors of the age-old temples of Baalbek and Palmyra."

Harald Ingholt, the leader of a Danish expedition, found some frescoes which prove Greek influence in the large necropolis of the third century B.C., and some others probably dating from 150 B.C. In some of their details and especially in their blend of eastern and Hellenist elements, these frescoes are reminiscent of those of Dura-Europos, and as Ingholt says in his essay on *Several frescoes recently found in Palmyra*,<sup>1</sup> theirs is an art which was Byzantine before Byzantium.

Excavations at Dura-Europos were begun in 1922 by M. Cumont and continued by M. Pillet, and operations were carried out at the same time by American archaeologists from the University of Yale. The excavations of 1929 in particular made it possible to form an accurate idea of the history of the city; it was found to contain the ruins of the most ancient citadels dominating the Euphrates (dating back to the third millennium), Roman sanctuaries erected by the Ulpia Legion, Christian churches, synagogues, a mithraeum, in fact a whole complex of extremely intriguing monuments which attest a civilization compounded of all the diverse elements which we have already referred to in the different periods of Syrian art. Greeks, Romans and Parthians followed one another here, masking the native art and introducing new forms which were superimposed on one another and sometimes combined. This explains Rostovtsev's discovery of an altar to Baal with a dedication in Greek, Parthian jewels and graffiti representing Parthian soldiers; Rowell's find of inscriptions proving that the city became a Roman colony under Caracalla; and the Christian frescoes which Hopkins found side by side with a statue of the god of Anat. One of the most interesting documents is the stele inscribed with an account of the earthquake which, at ten in the morning on an autumn day in the year A.D. 160, destroyed the city.

The mithraeum is one of the most beautiful monuments in a city which has seen many religions and cultures living side by side. Not only was it the first to be found in Asia but its perfect state of preservation, with its bas-reliefs of the second century and its frescoes of the third, make it one of the most representative types of Mithraic temples. It owes this state of preservation to the fact that, backing on to the ramparts, it had been protected by a thick covering of bricks and earth which were intended to strengthen the walls against Persian attacks. Unlike previously known sanctuaries of the Mithras cult, it was a real temple and not an underground cave. Restored by the emperors Caracalla and Geta in the course of

<sup>1</sup> *Acta Archeologica*, published by Levin, Copenhagen, 1932.

the second century, it served for the devotions of the men of the Fourth Scythia and Sixth Flavia Firma legions. It has been suggested by M. Cumont that the Mithras cult was brought to Dura-Europos by the Palmyrene soldiers of Lucius Verus in 164.

In layout the temple is similar to the Mithraic temples which can be seen in Italy, but aesthetically it surpasses them all—even that of Capua—in the splendour of its frescoes illustrating the legend of the god. But finally there is a document of supreme importance, beneath the representation of the seven trees and seven holy altars, in the form of two portraits of Zoroaster and Othanes, who were worshipped as the first apostles of the religion. The frescoes are not unlike the Manichaean miniatures which have been found at Turfan in Turkestan. Quite different in style and spirit from the paintings preserved in the third century synagogue, their simple yet imposing realism earns them pride of place in the magnificent artistic achievements of Dura-Europos. They are again different from the hunting frescoes, which are purely Sassanid in inspiration, and from the figures of the zodiac, which are more like the Christian paintings of the catacombs.

It would be interesting to compare the mithraeum of Dura-Europos with those found in 1932 at Kumanovo and in 1933 at Lopata. The differences between the two Serbian sanctuaries and the Syrian one would emerge quite clearly, especially where decoration is concerned, since the layout is almost always the same. Scattered throughout the Roman Empire wherever the legions passed, the Mithras cult was established along the banks of the Rhone just as it was on the banks of the Euphrates, at Mainz as at Kumanovo. The cult was everywhere the same but temple decorations were inspired by the art of the country concerned and the nationality of the soldiers worshipping the god. This accounts for the essentially eastern character of the religion as it manifested itself at Dura-Europos, diminishing at Kumanovo and coming nearer to Roman art in Italy. As for the mithraeum of Dieburg, which was discovered in 1927, it is more directly related in its bas-reliefs to Gallo-Roman sarcophagus sculpture, and in Germany provides what is almost a prelude to romanesque art. Analysis of the variations in the colonial style in the different aspects of the art springing from the Mithras cult would provide the substance of a fascinating aesthetic study.

In the same way that the mithraeum of Dura-Europos was preserved almost intact because it was embodied in the fortifications against the Persians, the synagogue, which was only built about ten years before the city was destroyed, was protected by the walls of brick and earth with which the Jews faced the interior—either to



*Fig. 24 One of the magi from the sanctuary at Dura-Europos*

conceal the frescoes or to preserve them from defilement by the besieging army. These frescoes, which depict scenes from the Old Testament, provide information which is almost unique on the way in which Jewish sanctuaries were decorated. The ancient Mosaic abomination of images appears to have yielded before Greek and Roman influence, and it is not unrewarding to compare these paintings with those found in the Christian churches of Dura-Europos and in the catacombs of the same period. The protecting inner walls erected by the faithful were not to no purpose, for they sheltered the paintings, which are of considerable importance in the history of art and religion, from possible damage, and they have come down to us in an almost perfect state of preservation.

The colourful history of Dura-Europos is illustrated by the discovery made by Clark Hopkins in 1934 of the siege methods used by the Persians when they attacked the city in 256. Thanks to the

efforts of archaeologists, and to Count du Mesnil du Buisson's sketches in particular, we know the sequence of these military operations as clearly as though journalists of the period had left us accounts of the fighting. After some fierce battles, the besieging army succeeded in breaking down the towers and walls of the city by undermining the powerful fortifications. It was in the galleries of the mines that the skeletons were found of soldiers who were taken unawares by the collapse of a countermine and suffocated. The positions of the bodies, which were still in armour, indicate how much they must have suffered as they were dying. Coins belonging to these soldiers—they may have had them in their payment as mercenaries or taken them as loot—were lying near the skeletons, which were encased in cuirasses and armed with useless swords.

Belgian excavations at Apamea since 1930, under the direction of M. Mayence, have only cleared a small part of the considerable area covered by the ruins of the city. It was first called Pharnake, Pelle, but Seleucos Nicator, who was the founder of the Seleucid dynasty (355 to 280 B.C.), gave it his wife's name and it was through this mark of his affection that it became Apamea. The Seleucids made it a rich and powerful city, the rival of Antioch. Apamea preserved its prosperity up to the seventh century when the Persians destroyed it with fire. The operations under M. Mayence have cleared some very important monuments, among others the great portico, which has now been restored and can be seen in the Brussels Museum. The diverse elements which have been combined in its decoration make it characteristic of Syrian eclecticism. Some very beautiful mosaics have also been cleared, with fine animal figures. They are akin to those of Antioch in style but less to the large mosaic of Yakto than to those found by the Franco-American expedition from the University of Princeton. These give a wonderful insight into the naturalism, the grace and the spirituality of Syrian mosaics.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PALESTINE

IT was only towards the middle of the nineteenth century that methodical and scientific excavations began in Palestine, and until quite recently, these only had bearing on Biblical times. Archaeology seemed like an instrument made available to scholars for checking and proving the texts of the Holy Scriptures. Sceptics used it to cast doubt on their historical truth and believers found yet another reason for affirming the irrefutable accuracy of the Biblical accounts.

Yet for some years now, interest has been taken in Palestine for something other than what it can tell us about the people of Israel. The long history of its inhabitants before the arrival of the Jews in the land of Canaan, and its even longer prehistory are today the chief incentives for research. It has been recognized that the historical importance of Palestine was always justified by its geographical position; it was, in fact, the major cross-roads of the trade route between Asia and Africa, the great halting-place on the caravan-route between the Euphrates and the Nile, the traffic route between Egypt and Babylon, and the highway for trade between the Mediterranean and the desert.

Among the early pioneers of Palestinian archaeology, it is Félicien de Saulcy who deserves the place of honour, for his is the work which has proved most fruitful. Although his discovery of the "Tombs of the Kings" in 1863 is not as historically important as he thought, it was he who initiated research none the less, and with the curious mixture of the scholar and visionary dreamer which manifested itself in him, he seems typical of a period when everything discovered in the Holy Land, of necessity, had to have some bearing on David or Solomon. His identification of the tombs he discovered as the famous royal tombs was not based on any scientifically valid evidence, but we have to admit that the wave of curiosity and then enthusiasm which was aroused on this occasion played an important part in the progress which has since been made in Palestinian archaeology.

Only a few years after Félicien de Saulcy made his discovery, the Palestinian Exploration Fund was created on the initiative of Sir George Grove. Two young British officers, Lieutenants Conder and Kitchener, one of whom was to achieve eminence in a field other than that of archaeology, took part in these operations, and

the future Field Marshal gave valuable service to the Palestine Exploration Fund, especially in topographical work.

During this period, for all that, research was limited almost exclusively to proving biblical texts and was consequently centred on Jerusalem. The slow progress which was made in Palestinian archaeology was largely due to this and for a long time no attention was paid to places where even brief examination would have revealed so much about the country's ancient civilization. In the meantime, years were wasted in discussing the topography of Jerusalem—so difficult to trace in the midst of all the buildings which had accumulated there and in the welter of true or false traditions which situated the Holy Places on some of the most improbable sites.

Science usually suffers whenever the attempt is made to prove a preconceived notion in the field, but this is particularly disastrous in archaeology which depends on the search for new facts and has to wait patiently for the findings yielded by investigation. The example of Sir Charles Warren, who obtained poor results despite the considerable amount of work which he did in Jerusalem, proves how fruitless it is to undertake research which stems from a desire to prove a literary text.

Towards 1890, a new method was introduced by Sir Flinders Petrie—a method with which he had produced excellent results in Egypt, and which was soon to reveal a Palestine previously unknown. Sir Flinders Petrie realized that there was more to Palestine than Jerusalem, and that of all ancient cities it was probably the one which could produce least information because legend there was so closely interwoven with history. Like all ancient cities burdened with a glorious past, Jerusalem rang with names which were familiar to everyone, and the awe which even its stones inspired, coupled with the religious fervour of the millions of worshippers who came to pay homage to the holy places mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, shielded the city from cold, objective, scientific scrutiny.

The British archaeologist accordingly turned his attention towards lesser known sites. In March, 1890, he set to work on the tumulus of Tell el Hesay near Gaza, where ancient Lachish was thought to have been situated. His interest had been drawn to this tell by the large number of pottery remains found there, and one of Petrie's basic convictions, now a fundamental of modern archaeology, was that however insignificant they may be, they always have information to reveal and are generally of even greater value than inscriptions. Nothing, in fact, can give a better idea of the essential character of a people and a generation than the pottery of a given place and time. In substance, form, decoration and style, pottery faithfully



reflects the changes in a civilization, its progress and decline, its original invention and its imitations of foreign work. The science of pottery, which today enables us to write the history of peoples simply by examining humble potsherds found in the ruins of dwellings or in heaps of rubble, had barely begun when, in a stay of six weeks at Tell el Hesi, Petrie sketched the main outline of his famous Palestinian pottery theory, which was to change the appearance of everything previously known about the history of the country.

When he left Tell el Hesi, Sir Flinders Petrie entrusted Dr. J. F. Bliss with the task of continuing his work, and he remained there for two years. The site was particularly well suited to excavation because the tell had been eroded by the waters of a river in such a way that the different geological strata became apparent almost at a glance and in perfect order, with nothing to interrupt the succession. Bliss identified the tell with Lachish when he discovered a cuneiform tablet, the first found in Palestine, which mentioned a certain Zimrida, known from the tablets of Tell el Amarna as governor of Lachish. Since Bliss's early work, Lachish has remained, as we shall see later, one of the richest and most prolific sites in data of every kind.

Bliss left Tell el Hesi for the valley of Elah, where tradition has it that David fought Goliath. There he cleared the tumulus of Tell Zakariya to reveal the remains of fortifications which were probably built during the period of Jeroboam; these give an excellent idea of what a fortified city in Palestine was like with its ramparts and inner stronghold. This complex of military constructions—known in Hebrew as "metsudah"—is particularly recognizable at Tell Zakariya.

Passing on to Tell es Safi, where the ruins of the crusaders' castle of Blanche-Garde stood, Bliss found a site which gave promise of some important discoveries. Before long, in fact, he had cleared a Canaanite sanctuary with three columns, as well as pieces of a number of objects in a heap of rubble; these were from Egypt and Mesopotamia, and proved the significance of foreign imports into Palestine. Encouraged by this success, the English scholar proceeded to excavate Tell el Judeideh, which, in an uninterrupted succession of layers, shows the remains of settlements from prehistoric to Roman times, and then Tell Sandahannah, whose name is a corruption of Santa Anna, for a church was dedicated to her here by the Crusaders. This was the site of ancient Moresheth, known to the Greeks as Marissa, and made famous in the Bible as the dwelling-place of the prophet Micah. In the hills around the tell, Bliss found a number of caves and labyrinths hollowed out of the rock, and what seemed like columbaria, though their use still remains rather a mystery, for we

cannot be absolutely certain that they served a funerary purpose.

After the impulse given by Félicien de Saulcy, French scholars did not remain inactive. The Dominicans of the Biblical School of Jerusalem carried out some extremely interesting and fruitful excavations, Clermont-Ganneau identified the site of Gezer or Gazara, the Assumptionist Fathers continued with research in the area of Jerusalem, and Père Hugues Vincent and M. Raymond Weill made very useful contributions to what was known of Palestinian antiquity.

The Germans, by founding the *Deutsch-Palaestina Verein* also had their share in the work which was done. Dr. Schumacher, who, on behalf of the *Deutsch-Palaestina Verein* had cleared the site of Megiddo at Tell Mutesellim, joined the archaeologists of the Palestine Exploration Fund at Gezer, where they had found traces of unbroken occupation from neolithic times right up to the Macchabees. Meanwhile other German scholars, Kohl, Tiersch and Watzinger, who had worked together at Baalbek, undertook a systematic study of the ancient synagogues of Galilee.

As early as 1902, Dr. Ernst Sellin, on behalf of Austria, undertook the first excavations in the northern part of Palestine in the ancient kingdom of Israel. It was chiefly at Tell Taanak that Sellin was able to confirm the cultural unity of the north and south; this could be recognized in similar types of dwelling—gatherings of rough huts between thick walls, in the ruins of which implements and pottery of similar type were found. Tell Taanak also yielded a hiding-place rich in cuneiform tablets, jars containing the bodies of children—the remains of sacrifices carried out at the time of foundation, and an altar which we shall discuss later.

In 1908, Sellin, collaborating with Langenegger and Watzinger, began excavations in Jericho, and these were to be continued some years later by Dr. Garstang. With the foundation of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, of which Garstang became the director, a new impulse was given to research. Continuing the work done by Duncan Mackenzie, who explored Beth-Shemesh on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund, Garstang cleared the site of Ascalon, which had been important from the period of the Philistines right up to the Crusades.

Finally, American universities began their excavations: Albright at Tell el Full, north of Jerusalem, on behalf of the American School of Archaeology; Clarence Fisher at Beisan (the Beth-Shean of the Bible) for the University Museum of Philadelphia; and George Reisner and D. G. Lyon, directing operations which were subsidised by the University of Harvard, cleared Samaria and brought to light the palaces of Omri and Ahab.

Widespread research, conducted in a more scientific spirit than that of the early pioneers who so enthusiastically sought traces of David and Solomon, has brought to light a Palestine which had never been dreamed of; the most recent discoveries which we shall examine later, are barely beginning to give us some measure of its importance. Study of prehistoric settlements has revealed that civilization existed here even in the remotest times. Methodical classification of pottery has made it possible to determine accurate chronology from palaeolithic times to the century of the Macchabees.

When Macalister wrote, "In Palestine, no trace of settled human occupation has hitherto been found, dating further back than about 3000 B.C.," he was not taking into account the many palaeolithic deposits which go back several thousand years further, because he regarded them as "nomadic" and because he held that "nothing has yet been found to bridge the gap between them and the late neolithic folk".<sup>1</sup>

Palaeolithic civilization in Palestine and Jordan seems similar, moreover, to that of Europe during the same period. There are the same Chellean and Mousterian flint tools, and the latter were accompanied by a skull of the so-called Neanderthal type, which was found in Galilee north of Tiberias. These tools occur in large numbers to attest the existence of a culture which seems more closely allied to that of Western than Eastern Europe. "The occupation of the land by man," writes Macalister, "began at a very early date. Stone implements indistinguishable from those of the successive stages of the European Palaeolithic Age, and presumably contemporary with them, have been found scattered over nearly its whole area. Man was privileged to see the great Pleistocene lake that once filled the Jordan valley, of which we may see only a shrunken remnant—that perfection of serene beauty and grandeur called the Dead Sea, which has strangely become a type of malediction and destruction. Chellean and Acheulean flint implements have been picked up around Ramleh, near Jaffa; the plain south of Jerusalem has yielded others, as well as examples of the later stages of the Palaeolithic Age (except the Solutrean, which does not appear to be represented in the country); the valleys of Galilee and of the Lebanon have also been productive of remains of this kind. No human bones have been found, except some scanty fragments from the cave of Antelias near Beirut."<sup>2</sup>

At the time when he was writing, Macalister did not know about the Mousterian skull which had recently been discovered in Galilee.

<sup>1</sup> Macalister, *A Century of Excavations in Palestine*, London, 1925, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Macalister, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

Interesting though the chipped stone age may be in Palestine, it is only with the neolithic period that we can recognize the existence of real civilization. It probably belonged to a non-Semitic race, living in caves, making rough flint knives, burning their dead, and very different from most neolithic races and all Semites in general.

We know nothing else definite about the inhabitants of Palestine in the neolithic period. They were the semi-mythical people referred to in the Bible as Horim, Anakim, Enim, Zuzim and Zamgummim; but we do not know whether they were aboriginals or immigrants, nor when Semitic tribes began settling in the country. Indeed, for a long time it was contested whether there had been a neolithic culture in the Near East. Jacques de Morgan denied this, basing his argument on the fact that at Susa, for example, evidence of the so-called neolithic culture had been found together with metal implements. Apart from Ararat and Syria, Morgan concluded after Hall's excavations on the site of Eridu that this region did not really have a true neolithic culture. He was furthermore of the opinion that Egypt had not had any neolithic settlements either. It was at this point that he applied the term "eneolithic"—distinguishing them in this way from true neolithic remains—to the famous neolithic layers found beneath the palaces of Knossos and Phaistos in Crete.

Historic times begin with the bronze age towards 2000 B.C. In the first place they cover the three Canaanite periods which occupy the entire era, and are now generally referred to by the terms which G. M. Fitzgerald applied to them: early Canaanite (beginning of the third millennium), middle Canaanite (2000 to 1600 B.C.), and late Canaanite (1600 to 1200 B.C.).<sup>1</sup>

The iron age can also be divided into three parts: early Palestinian (from 1200 to 600 B.C.), middle Palestinian (from 600 to 100 B.C.) and late Palestinian (100 B.C. to A.D. 636).

We should add that early Palestinian can also be subdivided in its turn into two periods: the first is Philistine and the second, Israelite.

Who were the Philistines? Despite the progress which has been made in Palestinian archaeology, this problem remains just as it was before excavations began. We know almost nothing of their origins or the nature of their civilization. It seems, none the less, that they possessed quite a developed culture, for they knew the use of iron at a time when the Israelites used nothing but bronze. But we must not conclude from this that they were generally superior. In all probability the use of iron among the Hebrews was restricted for a long time by a kind of religious inhibition, which forbade them

<sup>1</sup> *How to Observe in Archeology*, London, 1928.

to use it, for example, in the construction of a holy building (II Kings, vi, 7). Apart from this, the Philistines, whose position on the coast enabled them to control imports of the precious metal, were careful not to let iron fall into the hands of their neighbours, for by allowing them to produce better weapons, they would have diminished their military superiority. It was only when the power of the Philistines had been considerably weakened and religious demands had lost some of their force, that iron could be freely used for making weapons and implements, and could generally replace bronze—as it did during the reign of David.

It is through classification of the pottery fragments which Sir Flinders Petrie found at Tell el Hesi that we have been able to retrace the different periods of Palestinian chronology and distinguish the variations of culture in the course of the centuries. Where imported goods are concerned, the importance of trade and political relations emerges from the fact that Aegean vases are more numerous or that, on the contrary, Syrian or Egyptian produce gains in quantity and quality. Variations in national character can also be observed simultaneously as Palestinian potters imitate the work of their neighbours. Finally, when they use their native genius to create and no longer depend on others for inspiration, we can follow the alternating periods of brilliant productivity and idle, sluggish imitation; the stimulus of finer taste and the degeneration of a monotonous technique, no longer capable of anything new and drearily repeating old forms.

Pottery makes its appearance as early as the polished stone period, at the same time as flint implements and shell body adornments—necklaces, dressings for the nose and ears, and so on. It was made by hand, with porous material, awkwardly shaped and very imperfectly fired.

The potter's wheel appears with the early Canaanite period, though it was not generally in use; but pottery on the whole seems finer. Vases, jars, and bowls with convenient handles are quite elegant in design. Polychrome work now began to make its appearance; vases might be decorated with a moulded pattern imitating the plait of basketry, or they might be covered with painted vertical lines, usually reddish brown, on a background of white paste. Harmonies of red and black were very common. But painting was still awkward and it was rare for colour to hold: washing is sometimes quite enough to wipe it off. This taste for colour also occurred simultaneously in the use of semi-precious stones like cornelian, which replaced the shells of the neolithic period in the making of necklaces. We should bear in mind that if pottery and necklaces occur side by side with bronze implements and gold ornaments, it

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is also not unusual to find them among flint implements; these may have survived owing to the scarcity of bronze, unless they may be taken to reflect the religious tendency—quite a common one—by which the use of certain substances in ritual continued long after they had been discarded in everyday life.

Foreign influences mark the transformation of pottery during the transition from the early to the middle Canaanite periods. First in the material of the vase. The use of the wheel had become a general one, making it possible to achieve more symmetrical and harmonious forms. The clay was finer and better fired. The potter was now so skilled that he was no longer afraid to face difficult tasks, and we can see how he reproduced forms which were obviously those of alabaster or metal vases. This is to be recognized as Egypt's influence and has been confirmed by the discovery of Egyptian scarabs and alabaster flasks. Imported objects can no longer be distinguished with any certainty from those made by local craftsmen who had now achieved a very high measure of skill in reproducing foreign originals. Forms became more graceful, colours more lively, and the lack of experience which had led the artist to paint the vase after firing now yielded to confidence in his technique and an awareness of the effects he could produce. Animal designs, in which fish and bird motifs were the main ones used, now produced new themes, and these were handled with an equal measure of taste and imagination. Forms were more varied and less strictly limited by the use for which they were intended. Graceful, refined and even bizarre effects were striven for. Painting in red and black on a white background remained the general rule, but a new, very delicate, green toned pottery was already beginning to appear, and this was the mark of a very different trend from the one which had previously guided the hand of the Palestinian craftsman. The influence of Egypt, which was now in the twelfth dynasty, stimulated a desire for purely aesthetic effects which would have been quite inconceivable in the period before. Apart from this, the use of ceramics became widespread, for not only was it used for vases but lamps (some with four burners), spindles and even statuettes of a female deity resembling Astarte; this is one of the earliest examples of terra-cotta sculpture in the round.

This progress went still further during the third or late Canaanite period—still under foreign influence—but Egypt was no longer alone in dictating decorative themes to the native craftsman. Imported Cypriot and Aegean products now gave him fresh inspiration. By studying foreign workmanship, the Palestinian potter was able to draw on the elements of a new art, especially in ornamental motifs. His palette was now enriched: he made free use of

brown and purple as much as of red and black, with which he had so long been familiar. His timid attempts to represent animals expanded into a much wider area when once he learnt from Cretan vases of the mysterious beauty of the submarine world. In geometrical designs as well, he showed greater exuberance and imagination, combining chess-board and ladder themes, zigzags and spirals, stylized trees and waves. By isolating a motif in a "metope" or panel he also gave evidence of a new spirit in his use of themes and sense of composition. Small terra-cotta figurines also greatly increased; no longer was the deity represented alone, but all sorts of animals and even the models of dwellings. This was the period when commercial exchange with Egypt, Crete, Syria and the Hittites reached its height, as an abundance of hieroglyphic inscriptions and foreign objects (most of them Egyptian) attest.

With the twelfth century B.C., a new tendency appears in Palestinian pottery, and this is characterized by a sudden decline in the foreign influences which had so tyrannously governed the last Canaanite period. Coinciding with the beginning of the true Palestinian period and the dawn of the iron age, a new type of pottery appeared which can be referred to as "Philistine"; its coming was probably the mark of deep changes in the political orientation of the country. Bronze, as we said, still continued in current use, but iron also began to be used. The most characteristic vessels of the Philistine style were those combining geometrical and animal designs, whilst human figures also made their appearance, though quite rarely. Forms display a very clear return to simplicity with less concern for elegance than a kind of functional restraint; if this is truly the outcome of Philistine influence, we can only rejoice to see how it modifies the spirit and technique of Palestinian pottery by introducing forms and themes which are akin to those of the proto-geometric style of the Greeks.

A new change occurred during the following period, and we can best define it by quoting Macalister. "With the Israelite invasion," he says, "there comes . . . a sudden collapse in civilization; this is reflected in pottery as in the handiworks. There is no gradual deterioration; all at once the pottery is found to be coarse and ill-made; the shapes of jars and bowls lose all the grace which they had possessed; the painted decoration, such as it was, disappears entirely, or at most is restricted to single lines encircling the vessel. This ill-designed and ill-executed pottery lasts throughout the time of the Hebrew monarchy; nothing can give a better idea of the low state of general culture during that period."<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately the influence of Hellenism, which manifested itself

<sup>1</sup> Macalister, *op. cit.*, p. 240.



*Fig. 25 Vase in Philistine style with animal and geometrical design*

towards the beginning of the third century B.C., brought change to the evolutionary process once again. The war of the Macchabees can be regarded as a struggle against the progressive hellenization of the country, but this nationalist movement failed to prevent the produce of Hellenist cities from making its way into Palestine and exercising a salutary pressure on artistic style. We should also add that the Greek works imported were not of the best; the fragments of vessels found in Palestine, vases with black or red figures, and white lecythi, might well be taken for shoddy articles which merchants thought good enough for the customers with whom they were dealing. However imperfect this imported produce may have been, it sufficed to modify the taste and technique of native craftsmen. Firing improved, the surface gained greater smoothness, the ornamentation a better finish. Decorations were sometimes imprinted or modelled, but where they were painted it is possible to recognize a sense of symmetry, harmony and restraint which brought this native work nearer to its Hellenic originals. White wreaths on a black background, black or red bands on a light background—these were the main themes of the period. Palestinian artists, like Greek ones, sometimes wrote their names on the vases they made; these names were usually either Greek or hellenized Hebrew ones.

With the Roman occupation, the Hellenist tendency in pottery disappeared. It was replaced by the red glazed pottery of the so-called Aretine type, which was at first imported and also finally imitated by native workmen. The history of Palestinian pottery can



now be said to have lost its interest. It did not regain it during the Byzantine period, but it is interesting to observe that the Arab occupation brought a revival of the old Canaanite ware; fragments were probably found by the newcomers among the debris of the tells. They copied this work, even in its defects, in as much as the paint which was applied after firing can be removed by washing. It can be assumed that the Moslems were attracted by the non-representational side of Canaanite art, for they never imitated living forms.

The number of inscriptions found in Palestine is so small that they would never have sufficed to give us any idea of the history or customs of the various occupants of the country if temples and tombs had not yielded adequately clear information about funerary practices and, to some extent, religious cults. With the exception of the stone of Moab, which dates from about 850 B.C., and of which only an impression remains (the Arabs shattered it immediately after it was found in the ingenuous hope that it contained a treasure), the Gezer calendar, which indicates the things to be done in each month, and the ostraca of Samaria and Lachish, there are almost no other texts. For all that, one of the most interesting ones is provided by the inscription on the sarcophagus of Ipphesbaal, son of Ahiram, king of Byblos; this was found by M. Pierre Montet at Byblos.

Because they have so many different types, tombs provide abundant material for study. None, unfortunately, have been found with funerary equipment comparable to those of Mesopotamia or Egypt; perhaps this was because the custom of burying the dead with their wealth never took root here or because robbers, forestalling scholars as they did everywhere else, laid hands on everything which tempted their greed, in spite of traps, false doors, walled up corridors, blind alleys, and so on.

The earliest tombs were natural caves. The Canaanite tribes began by using the caverns and crevices in rock to bury their dead with weapons, ornaments and pottery vases containing food. Macalister suggests that the very old and widespread custom of placing eatables in tombs was intended to save the dead from depending on the food of the shades. It was thought in fact that whoever tasted it was doomed to remain for ever in the land of the shades; the Greek myth of Persephone is a striking vehicle for this prehistoric belief. By giving the body all the provisions it needed, it was spared from touching the food which would force it to remain for ever in the underworld.

The custom of using natural caves as tombs was later dispensed with, but they were hewn out of the rock, usually in a circular shape and with a low entry. In the middle Canaanite period, tombs

became rectangular and access more complicated—either by means of a corridor or a shaft opened in the ceiling. The bodies were at first placed lying in a curled up position and then extended.

At the beginning of the Palestinian period we find clay sarcophagi with the top representing a human head. Graves later became larger and more complicated; some, like the tomb of Silwan near Jerusalem are almost as large as Egyptian mastabas.

In Palestine there is a type of tomb which is quite unique; this is known by the name of "kokim" and in it the corpses were placed on forms which were arranged perpendicularly to the walls; usually there were nine. The beds were later placed parallel to the walls; this is the type known as "arcosolia" which is commonest in the Christian period but is occasionally to be found as early as the Herodian period as well. Kokim and arcosolia were sometimes combined in the same tomb, as we find in the so-called graves of the Judges north of Jerusalem.

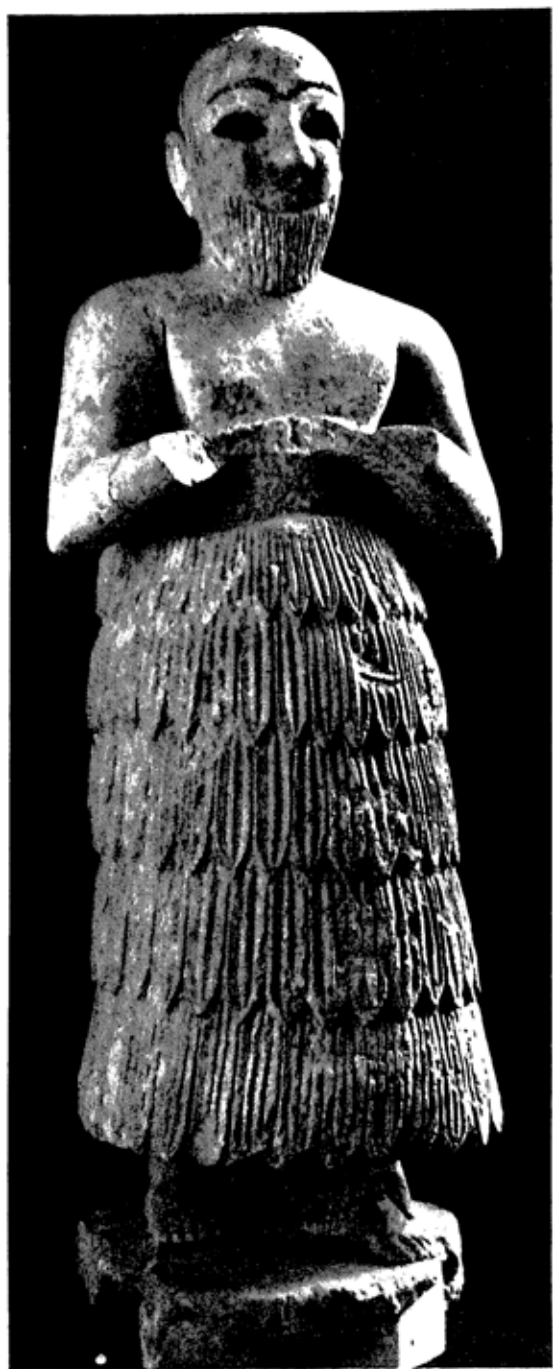
Hellenist influence also modified funerary technique. Graves were more decorative and contained deposits of statuettes, lamps, ornaments and even pots of make-up—as we find in the tomb of Beit Jibrin. The most beautiful of these Hellenist tombs is that of Apollonophanes at Marissa; this contained superb paintings with real and imaginary animal friezes, and accompanying these were some precious Greek inscriptions. Unhappily these were destroyed by the fanatical Moslems.

Beside the hollowed out tombs there were others which were built, and the finest examples of these were found at Khirbet Sema near Safed, and at Tell Barak near Caesarea. The latter contained a beautiful sarcophagus, dating from the second century A.D., which was particularly interesting for the style of its bas-reliefs. Among other things, it depicts a Battle of the Amazons, probably the work of a native artist, who took Greek themes and adapted them to the taste of the country. What is most intriguing about his departures from usual forms is that he gives a Semitic appearance to his figures, covers nudes with clothing, and brings a touching if awkward pathos to their attitudes which differentiates them from all other colonial manifestations of Hellenist style.

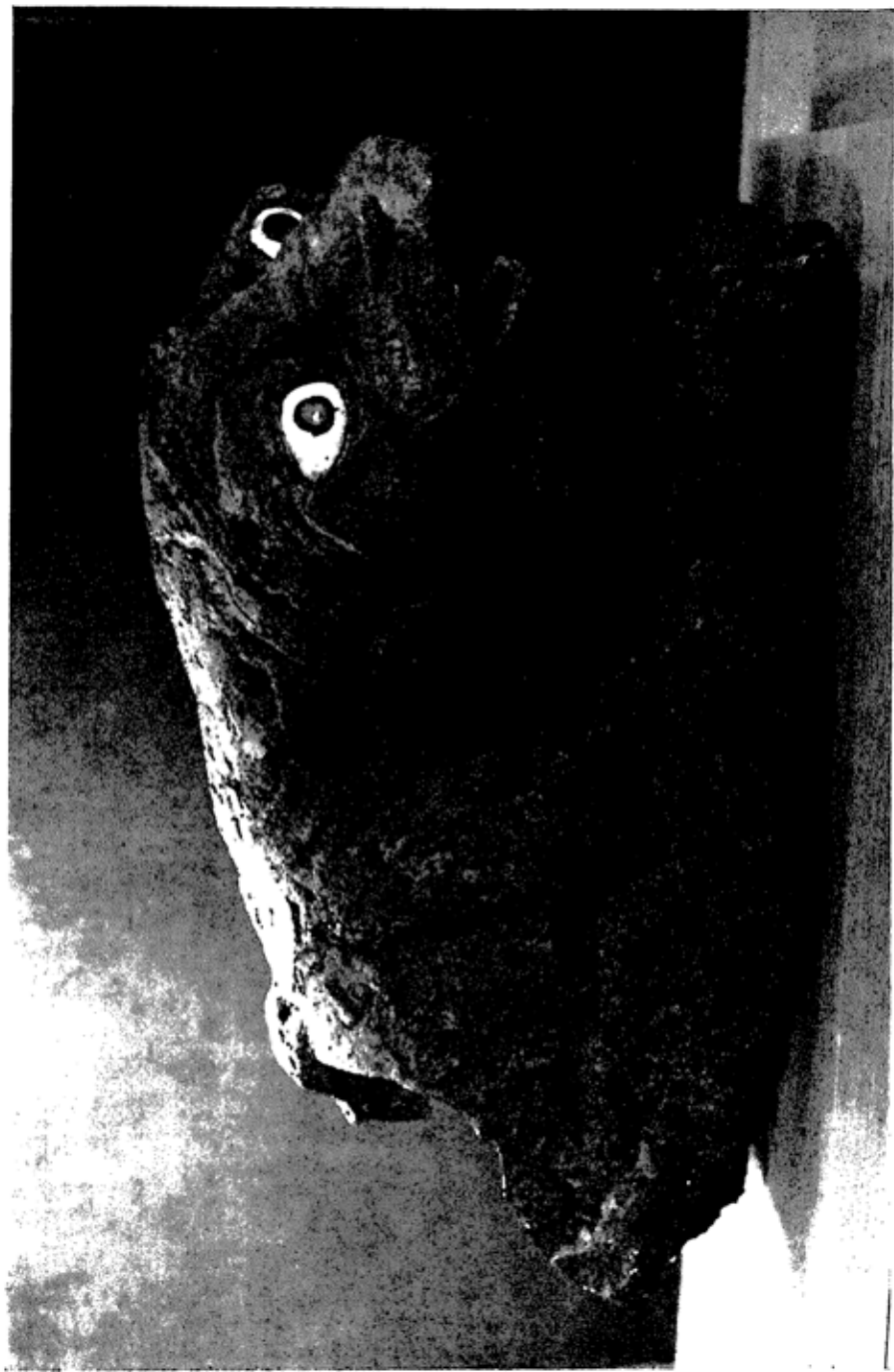
A number of Canaanite temples have been discovered at Kirjath Sepher, at Beth-San, at Tell es Safi and at Gezer. The "high places" were very old sanctuaries. The *welsh* studied by Père Antonin Janssen of the Biblical School, and Professor Curtiss of Chicago, demonstrate in the veneration which the Moslems still have for them, to what extent devotion to the Marabouts has perpetuated the most ancient pagan cults. This sometimes makes it difficult to carry out excavations where they could be most rewarding.



The great goddess, Mycenaean ivory from Ras-Shamra (?)



Statuette of a worshipper, Mari, gypsum, third millennium B.C.



Lion from Dagan, Mari, bronze



Fresco of Knossos

The temple of Tell es Safi is a sanctuary with three columns of rough stone, the only ones remaining from the four or perhaps seven, which it had originally. "The central base of the seven—that of which the base alone remained—was not quite in alignment with the rest, but was slightly to the north of the line. To the north of it there was a semicircular wall, the convex face turned towards the column, the concave face towards the apse-like recess in the centre of the northern wall of the square enclosure. These curved walls evidently had some ritual purpose which, in our ignorance of the ancient rites, eludes us. A row of small chambers, three or perhaps four in number, ran along the south side of the enclosure: there seems to have been a similar row, or perhaps one long chamber, along the north side. The alignment itself ran east and west."<sup>1</sup>

The temple of Gezer offers a similar row of columns but in better condition. "Similar in character, though more imposing was the alignment of rude pillar-stones found at Gezer. Here there was a group of seven stones, in height ranging from 5 feet 5 inches to 10 feet 9 inches, and a separate group of three stones (two of them reduced to stumps) in the same line but divided from the others by a wide space. These monoliths stood on a platform of small stones. The surviving member of the group of three was not of local limestone; it displayed peculiarities of texture which differentiated it from the stone of the district. It has been suggested that this had originally been a sacred stone in the High Place of some rival city, which had been dragged to Gezer as a mark of conquest, as Mesha dragged the 'Ariels' from the shrine of Yahweh and set them up in his own holy place . . ."<sup>2</sup>

All round the high place of Gezer, a large number of terra-cotta figurines has been found, representing the mother-goddess or goddess of fertility, together with phallic symbols. These statuettes can be linked with the terra-cotta figurines representing a bull, which are often to be found in Palestine and must be related to the same cult. We should also mention the little human figures in lead discovered at Tell Sandahannah. The fact that they are mutilated and bound with metal wires indicates that they were used for sympathetic spells.

The altar of Taanach is one of the most remarkable objects in Palestinian antiquities. It was studied by Ernst Sellin in his report on the excavation of Tell Taanach, but as a summary we shall give the description made by Macalister:

"This altar is undoubtedly the most important cult-object which

<sup>1</sup> Macalister, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277. See also *Memoirs on the Excavation of Gezer*, London, 1921.

Palestine has as yet yielded. It belonged to a private house; there was no holy place anywhere near the site which yielded its fragments. Probably it had been broken by the fall of the house in which it stood. It was not of a very high antiquity; the pottery found associated with it, or near it was certainly of the iron age, and probably of the seventh or eighth century B.C.

"It proved . . . to be a hollow box of terra-cotta 2 feet 11 inches high, on a base 1 foot  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches square. The walls of the box are from 1 to 2 inches thick. Towards the top the object narrows; in its summit is a basin-like hollow 11 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches across. There is no bottom to the 'box' and never has been. It can hardly be doubted that this was an altar for burning incense. The fire was lit upon the ground and the box placed over it. Square holes were left in the front and back of the object, to admit ventilation to the fire, and to provide an exit for the smoke. The incense was placed in the basin at the top, and the fire underneath heated it sufficiently to enable it to give forth its fumes.

"Around the basin on the top a number of circles are impressed on the clay; and beneath the edge, on each side, there had been a handle, in the shape of a vertical disk projecting outward from the side and worked on one face into a spiral. This probably was meant to represent a horn. The handle on one of the sides had been broken off, and it was not recovered with the rest of the fragments.

"Below these handles, on each side of the 'box', there is a remarkable pile of animal or quasi-animal figures. These are five in number; they are alternately composite creatures (quadrupeds with wings and with human heads, wearing a sort of cap with dependent tassels) and lions. One of the man-headed figures is just under the handle; it stands on the back of a lion, which in its turn stands on a man-headed figure standing on the ground. It may be questioned whether the maker of the altar intended this piled-up effect to be thus understood by the spectator; rather are we apt to suppose that he meant to suggest the altar as being flanked by five beings on each side—a cherub (for the composite beings are probably cherubim) and a lion alternately. On the altar they are represented as in a sort of rude perspective. In addition to these ten figures there is, on one of the sides, behind and above the lower lion, a relief representing a boy or man holding by its neck a snake, which is coiled in semi-circle around him. Low down on the front of the object, between the projecting heads of the lower figures, is another relief, representing a tree, with two gazelles or ibexes leaping up and feeding upon its top-most branches. This device is very obscure and is much injured."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Macalister, *op. cit.*, p. 291. E. Sellin, *Tell Tanaak*, Vienna, 1904.



Excavations in hand so far embrace a great many sites, only a few of which can be mentioned. At Beitin north of Jerusalem, for example, the American School of Archaeology, under Père Vincent, cleared Bethel, where the remains of the Israelite, Macchabean and Roman periods are to be found piled on one another. At Talgha, on an eminence situated between Tiberia and Capernaum, Bridgeman, an American, discovered some Egyptian stelae commemorating the victory of Tuthmosis III over the Mitannians. Tell el Hosn has revealed the ruins of a Canaanite city of extreme antiquity, which preserves the evidence of many occupations. E. Sukenik, Director of Excavations for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has represented the Jewish people in the study of their land of origin. At Beth-Alpa in Galilee, and in conjunction with a party from the Exploration Society under Nahum Sloush (discoverer of the ancient synagogue of Tiberias, the "pillar of Absalom" in the valley of Cedron, the Pyramid of Zacharias, and so on), he found a Galilean synagogue with a large mosaic dating back to the period of Justin I (A.D. 518-527).

Kirjath Sepher, since 1928, has been one of the main centres of operation for the American School of Jerusalem. Under the ruins of the fortress, successive layers have been found which provide evidence of continuous occupation from the third millennium until the destruction of the city by Sennacherib in 701. The fortifications are very remarkable and make up a magnificent complex of defence systems.

According to Garstang, the oldest parts date from the bronze age; they were probably destroyed several times and only the upper wall is likely to date back to the period of Joshua. Professor Albright has found proof that Joshua's conquest took place in about 1200 at the end of the bronze age, although the Hebrews had occupied central Palestine for some three centuries.

In the same place, the archaeologists of the Pittsburg Seminary cleared the remains of a Canaanite temple decorated with stone lions, and containing offering tables which were also carved with lions. Among these animals, it is possible to recognize treatment similar to that of the lions on the altar of Taanach, at the temple of Mekal at Beth-San and the synagogue of Chorazim.

Eighteen miles south of Gaza, Sir Flinders Petrie discovered ancient Beth-Paleth near the site of modern Tell Fara. In what is now a waste land, there was once a city which owed its importance to its strategic position on the route to Egypt and to the fact that it commanded the only point where plentiful water supplies could be obtained. Its people was strong and warlike, and it was from Beth-Paleth that David recruited his life guard, who were known as the

Pelethites. The Hyksos built a citadel there and this was later reinforced by Ramses III. A cemetery covering a large area has yielded tombs containing ancient pottery and more recent graves with the remains of funerary equipment which managed to escape the robbers' greed. Pieces of silver plate, some of which are of Syrian origin, and others which are typically Israelite and bear no resemblance to any foreign model, confirm what was known of the wealth of Beth-Paleth.

Gaza was also very powerful by virtue of its position as a meeting-point between Asia and Africa. Alexander vainly laid siege to it for months. The earliest city of Gaza was by the sea and possessed the best port in Palestine, but around 2000 B.C. malaria became so rife that the inhabitants were compelled to leave the maritime city and settle on the hill where the ruins were found. Gaza, as a fortress-city, changed hands many times; the palaces cleared by Sir Flinders Petrie reveal these successive occupations, starting from the earliest settlement of the Syrians, who made it a base for their operations against Egypt in 3100 B.C. The Syrians were actually preceded some centuries earlier by unknown inhabitants who left nothing but some tombs rich in copper objects. Some foundation deposits were found, the remains of horses sacrificed during the period of the Hyksos by whom the animals were reintroduced into Palestine; they had disappeared from the area twenty thousand years earlier and to date the reason for this is still unexplained. It has been deduced from an examination of the remains that when the horses were sacrificed, they were probably cut up and eaten during a ritual feast.

Schechem is a large Canaanite fortress which was found by Gabriel Welter. The invaders who would have attempted to advance along the great route of the Jordan were kept at a respectful distance by it, and it commanded the pass between Mount Garizim and Mount Ebal. This fortress, Hittite in style, was begun in 1400 and lasted till the reign of Abimelech (1100 B.C.). It is noteworthy for its gigantic walls, made with huge stones, which were between 2 and 3 metres in length and finished with clay. The temple of Baal-Berith, at the foot of Mount Garizim, dates from the same period. It contained a fetish-stone which was the image or symbol of the divinity. The great king of Sicheem may have been the famous Labaya who is referred to in the Tell el Amarna letters, and whose realm extended from Gezer to Esdrelon.

In 1934 Sir Flinders Petrie uncovered a treasure which is thought to date from the period of the shepherd-kings; it is very different from everything we know so far of the work of the goldsmiths of Egypt and Mesopotamia. There are some strange jewels bearing human shapes, and these are unlike any known model; there are

daggers which, in spite of their originality, have some affinities with those of Luristan; and there are cylinders which are neither Hittite nor Mesopotamian: all these things confirm the existence of a style never met with before and which was probably peculiar to the shepherd-kings.

In the American excavations at Jerash, or ancient Gerasa, one of the capitals of the Decapolis, some of the most important finds are Roman buildings. In tombs of the Roman period, terra-cotta statuettes were found, and their "colonial style" indicates certain affinities with the art of Baalbek and Palmyra. This funerary treasure is undoubtedly far from complete for the main tomb, having been stripped of all the objects of value which it contained, was used for pressing oil. The American School, which carried out its research in these ruins with the permission of the Jordanian government, found the remains of some beautiful lamps which probably date from the period of Hadrian. The humanist emperor visited Gerasa in the year 130 as an inscription on a recently cleared triumphal arch attests. The spirit of the renaissance which Hadrian set in motion—the Hellenism of a cultured emperor who was also a man of taste—can be retraced even in statuettes which, drawing their inspiration from the best Greek models, reproduced them, but with a freedom of treatment which is pre-eminently characteristic of the baroque extreme. J. H. Iliffe, the curator of the Palestine Museum, rightly associates them with the work of the school of Aphrodisias in Caria, which was founded by Hadrian to diffuse the copies of Greek prototypes in the eastern world.

At Hauran in Jordan, Professor Hrozný of the University of Prague investigated a site which is identified with the dwelling-place of Job in the little village of Sheik Saad. The inhabitants there still show a basalt slab which is called "the rock of Job". This rock is actually a stele erected by Ramses II to commemorate his passing through during the war against Khattusil III, king of the Hittites. Hittite antiquities found here are very remarkable—especially a magnificent lion. Fragments of Hellenist statues, the ruins of a Greek temple and an early Christian basilica heighten the interest which "Job's city" can offer the archaeologist.

The name of Gerar is one which often recurs in the Bible but until quite recently, when this ancient city was identified with modern Tell Jemmeh, its precise position remained in doubt. From the earliest excavations, the site proved to be a very rich one. Six cities rose above one another in the ruins of the tell, the oldest probably dating back to 1500, and the most recent to 400 B.C. Iron knives dating from 1350 were found there, furnaces for smelting iron which are not later than 1200, large farming tools, and all the

materials necessary for making swords. The city of the period of Shishak (as his name indicates, he was a Persian and had probably come from Iran) is rich in pottery, jewels and statuettes representing Astarte. Sir Flinders Petrie dated these statuettes according to their head-dress, attributing those with the hair worn like a wig to an Egyptian period (or to a period of Egyptian influence), and distinguishing Syrian influence (coinciding with political sovereignty) among those with two rolled plaits on the sides of the head. The influence of Assyria can be recognized in terra-cotta models of chariots and in incense altars. To the reign of Esarhaddon we owe some beautiful cylinders, and the presence of Cypriot pottery confirms that there were relations between the two countries, whilst some of the forms of fibula probably originated in Europe and some types of arrow-head came from Central Asia.

The sites of Beth-Shan and Lachish are those in which the variety of Palestine's culture and the many elements which meet and combine in it appear most clearly in their different periods. What we have said about pottery applies just as much in other spheres. Invaded several times and occupied by the most different races, one after the other, Palestine became a melting-pot in which cultures sometimes accumulated over one another and sometimes fused, blending their distinctive features with the peculiarities of the native civilization.

Beisan, or Biblical Beth-Shan, is an ancient Canaanite city, situated on the far eastern side of the valley of Jezreel, on the Jalud, a tributary of the Jordan. This was the site or the "acropolis of the Scythians", and it is to this fact that it owes its name of Scythopolis. Excavations started in 1922 by the University of Pennsylvania under Fitzgerald, Clarence Fisher and Alan Rowe, brought to light the very important remains of the Canaanite city; among these were two interconnected temples dating back to 1500 B.C. and probably representing the earliest examples of sanctuaries regarded as the dwelling of the god and replacing the earlier enclosure, the *temenos*, which was the old form for places of worship. Beth-Shan was uninterruptedly occupied from 3000 B.C., as its many tombs attest; the most important of these are those of the bronze age, with typical pottery, and those of the iron age, which are characterized by curious clay coffins of so-called "Philistine" type. Egyptian documents relating to Seti I, Ramses II and Amenophis III were found there in large numbers, and a beautiful statue of Ramses III. Some Roman tombs were also discovered, as well as a Christian basilica (the oldest in the East), with magnificent mosaic paving. With the temples, the most important building in Beth-Shan is the *migdol* or Canaanite fortress; this is perfectly preserved and it enables us to

form an impression of military building during this period. Altered in different periods, the *migdol* was the keep and centre of a whole complex of fortifications. Not far from it was a cemetery where the mercenaries in Egypt's service were buried in man-shaped coffins. The *migdol* was not only a stronghold but a victualling centre, as the neighbouring silos (some were still full of grain) can prove; a number of inscriptions were also left there by craftsmen and scribes. Apart from the remains of the Egyptian occupation, there were many objects which bear witness to foreign influence; Syro-Hittite cylinders, Cypriot and Aegean pottery, and a curious stone throne, Minoan in style and exactly like those found in Crete, but bearing Egyptian symbols.

Ancient Lachish is near the modern village of Qubeibeh, 25 miles south-west of Jerusalem. This city, which was of great importance as far back as the copper age, owes the considerable development which it later underwent during the period of Egyptian domination and the occupation by the Hebrews, to its strategic position. First inhabited by cave-dwellers who made their homes in holes which they hollowed out of the hillsides (these were subsequently used as tombs), Lachish became a centre of Canaanite civilization which was to succumb to the influence of Mesopotamia. Then the pharaohs of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties established their authority. From this period there remains a temple dating from 1300 or 1250 B.C., where the Welcome Archaeological Research Expedition under J. L. Starkey found some valuable objects of Egyptian origin.

Lachish took advantage of the political weakness which was an outcome of Akhnaton's idealistic theories to revolt and recover its independence, but this did not save it from later falling into the hands of several other invaders. Lachish, indeed, was a city to which trade had brought great wealth, favourably placed, as it was, on the caravan route, and its prosperity made it a temptingly easy prey to its neighbours. When the Hebrews settled there, they accordingly built a citadel which was reinforced by a double wall of stone, but this could not withstand Nebuchadnezzar when he laid siege to it in 598 B.C. Reduced to ashes by the King of Babylon, it was rebuilt by the Persians under Cyrus, whose governor built his palace and a temple dedicated to the sun on the ruins of the old fortified palace of the Hebrews.

The memory of all these many changes of fortune is recorded in the objects which the ruins of Lachish yield so abundantly: specimens of Canaanite pottery, some of which were probably beer vessels (beer was the favourite drink of the peoples of Canaan), Egyptian jewels, fragments of pottery bearing Hebrew texts, and Syro-Hittite

seals—all representing different phases of occupation. The inscriptions are particularly interesting; some actually provide a transition stage between the pictographic writing of Serabit el Khadem in Sinai, and the Phoenician alphabet. There are others which refer by name to people we previously knew from the Bible: the Jewish general Achbar ben Elnatan, for example, and the grandson of King Nedebyahu.

There is unending proof of relations with Egypt, as well as many objects attesting trade exchanges with Syria, the Hittite empire and Greece, which is principally represented by a beautiful vase in Helladic style from the fifteenth or fourteenth century, found side by side with a statue of the Hittite god Teshub and some Egyptian amulets. A curious feature was revealed by excavations in 1936: an ingeniously trepanned skull which demonstrates how far the surgeons of Lachish had succeeded in perfecting their skill even in remote antiquity.

Continuing his excavations in the cemetery and in the ruins of the city, Mr. Starkey recently added to the wealth of inscriptions which is making the "Lachish letters" as famous as those of Tell el Amarna. He cleared a part of the city which seems, from the buildings and objects it contains, to have been the merchants' quarter: some of its shops are as well preserved as those of Pompeii.

Excavations carried out by Dr. Reisner for the University of Harvard have retraced Samaria, the ancient capital of Ahab, and cleared the powerful ramparts which held the Assyrians in check for three years. Samaria's prosperity dates from the time when Omri, in 880 B.C., built huge reservoirs and thus made it possible for the city to have a supply of drinking water. Legend has it that Ahab had his famous "house of ivory" built in Samaria. The excavations have in fact yielded a large number of ivory plaques, some displaying themes and style which were Egyptian, whilst in others the style was Syrian. The former were bas-reliefs, gilded and inlaid with colours; the latter were bored right through and showed either Asiatic or Mesopotamian motifs, or composite animals, like the curious combination of the sphinx and the kerub, which has been found nowhere else. These precious works of art, worthy to be compared with the ivory treasures of Arslan Tash and Nimrud, belonged, if not to the famous "ivory house", at least to a rich suite of beds, chests and chairs like those now in the Louvre which belonged to Hazael, king of Damascus, and a contemporary of Jehu.

Discoveries made by the American expedition from the University of Chicago, led by Gordon Loud, on the site of Megiddo, have revealed the features of the powerful city which separated the plain of Esdrelon from that of Sharon and commanded the Carmel road.

The excavations have mainly uncovered the layout and the walls of Solomon's city, the extensive remains of a Canaanite temple (the most complete and best preserved which has been found so far), and some ruins which are undoubtedly those of the stud where King Solomon reared his famous horses. The tell shows the signs of occupation from the fourth millennium, but it is only from 2000 B.C. that it becomes continuous.

As at Beth-Shan and Lachish, the ruins are full of objects imported from abroad—Greek and Cypriot vases, Egyptian jewellery, Hittite bronzes (among them a beautiful statue of Rephesh the god of war) and an even more remarkable find, a liver of clay of the kind used by Babylonian magicians in soothsaying, or rather, to teach their pupils the difficult art of reading the future in the liver of a sacrificed animal. Each part of the liver of clay bears a sign corresponding with a certain portent and which can then be easily recognized in the liver of the dead animal.

The Canaanite temple had preserved its altars, its offering tables, and most of its ritual accessories, as well as an assortment of vases, bowls and incense-burners.

The origins of Jericho go back to the first bronze age (about 2500 B.C.), but Mr. Garstang points out that neolithic settlements were already occupying the little hill known as the Fountain of Elysium. Five centuries later, during the period of the patriarchs, great grey walls of dried brick marked out the fortifications of a much more important and more extensive city from which a number of ivory objects and some pottery dating back to 1900 B.C. (first period of the Middle Bronze Age) have been found. From the vases and effigies discovered in tombs, it seems that Canaanite civilization at this time was dependent on Mesopotamia both for its art and its funerary rites. The period of the Hyksos follows (1800 to 1600 B.C.) and the most important evidence of their occupation is a remarkable rhyton with a human face—a unique work of art in many respects. The realism of the features, and the treatment of the beard and hair, represented by pinpricks, are in some ways reminiscent of the violent and caricatural realism of the Roman decadence. In studying "the unknown man of Jericho", one is inadvertently reminded of the famous portrait of Maximinus Thrax and this adds to the considerable interest of an unprecedented work.

The pottery of the period of the Hyksos was graceful, made with the wheel and lightly yet imaginatively decorated with geometric motifs. The prosperity of the Hyksos lords was eclipsed by the armies of the Egyptians who reduced them to vassalage. This subjection and the earthquakes which destroyed several parts of the city in

the fifteenth century B.C. deprived Jericho of the political supremacy which it had enjoyed and made it a dependency of Egypt.

From this period, Canaanite art reflects the influences of Egypt, Crete and Cyprus. Examination of the tombs "by brush and trowel", as Mr. John Garstang puts it, attests this foreign ascendancy. The Hyksos walls were allowed to fall in ruins, and by the time of Joshua, the ancient capital had declined so far that its population was reduced to about 1,500 inhabitants. The pitiful state of the ramparts allows a new interpretation to the famous story in the Bible, which tells how the blasts on the trumpets of the Jews, repeated over a week, were sufficient to blow down the fortifications. It has been ingeniously suggested that the trumpet blasts accompanying the march of the Hebrew troops round the besieged city were nothing more than a means of concealing the undermining operations which the attackers were carrying out. When this was completed, a fresh blast, in which the temple musicians now joined, would warn those engaged in the work to leave their galleries and rejoin the army. It would then have sufficed to set fire to the woodwork in the galleries—the normal practice in laying siege to a city in ancient times—to cause the mines to collapse, and with them the walls.<sup>1</sup>

What was the period of this astonishing victory which confirmed the might of Israel? Historians and archaeologists are not entirely agreed. Père Vincent holds that Joshua's trumpet blasts blew down the ramparts of the city in 1250; Garstang, who is also an eminent authority on Palestinian antiquities, takes the date back to 1400; Professor Ernest Wright would have a general compromise by allowing a greater margin of probability—between 1475 and 1300. Since Garstang's excavations at Jericho penetrated to the earliest settlements of the stone age, this city with a name perpetuated in the Old Testament seems to go back even further than Sellin imagined when he began his research on behalf of the *Deutsche Orient Gesellschaft*. Pottery allied to that of Hassuna and stone age Nineveh was found in the neolithic layers, and from the evolution of styles we can say that a real civilization existed here around 4500 B.C.; but it was only with the appearance of bronze in about 3000 that Jericho truly became a city; before that it had been nothing more than a rather primitive settlement of shepherds and farmers, though these lived in houses and had temples—proving that they had become sedentary. Their sanctuaries with wooden pillars contained terra-cotta statuettes representing animals, and these were offered to the gods to win their protection for their flocks.

A curious fact to be observed is that even before they possessed the skill to make pottery, the artists of Jericho were modelling

<sup>1</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 16th December, 1933.





*Fig. 26 Statuette of a man, neolithic period, Jericho*

images of men, women and children, and these were grouped in threes to represent a family; the family was undoubtedly a divine one, like that of Osiris, Isis and Horus among the Egyptians. The statues were made of ordinary clay which was coated over a framework or skeleton of reeds; they were quite large—two-thirds of life-size—but extremely flat, as though the artists of the period were not concerned with achieving spatial realism; perhaps the figures were intended to be placed with their backs to the walls of a sanctuary, or to serve some ritual or superstitious purpose which is a mystery to us and will probably always remain so.<sup>1</sup>

Latterly, archaeologists appear to be turning their attention from Palestine's historical periods to study the sites where there are manifestations of civilization's beginnings. Great importance is attached to evidence of a megalithic civilization similar to the one we find in Europe, the islands of the Mediterranean and even Asia, which proves that megalithic culture covered a huge area, extending to India and Central Africa. In Palestine as elsewhere, this civilization left quite a large number of dolmens, circles of erect stones, isolated menhirs and immense fortifications which are not unlike the nuraghi of Sardinia. It is thought that they date from about 6000 to 4000 B.C.

This method of building with large stones which were placed on

<sup>1</sup> Reproductions of these statues will be found in *The Archaeology of Palestine*, by W. F. Albright, London, 1949.

top of one another, each weighing several tons, was indiscriminately used for the tombs at Ghassul, for example, where Stekelis found them in 1950, and for the homes of the living, as at Wadi Dhobai. Garstang also found some at Mersin in Cilicia, in a form which is common in the Middle East. Albright's theory is that the builders of the megaliths were half-nomad, half-sedentary sheep-raisers who did not know the art of pottery-making—like those whose graves have been found in the area of Sinai. Why should a people who changed their dwelling-places of their own free will and who worked with such primitive implements go to such immense trouble to erect these awe-inspiring buildings? Could it have been their object to bestow on their dead and their gods—whose dwellings are not always distinguishable from those of their worshippers—an unshakable stability which they did not need for themselves?

Among the neolithic or chalcolithic civilizations which have been identified and studied during the last ten years or so, special mention should be made of that of Tell el-Far'an, which was explored by Père Roland de Vaux in a huge tell north-east of Nablus. Whilst Sukenik was clearing the remains of the third wall of the fortifications of Jerusalem, in 1944 Stekelis, Maisler and Avi-Yonah were tackling the ancient "City of the Moon", the Beth-yerak of the Canaanites on the site of Khirbet-Kerak.

If archaeologists look on tiny scraps of pottery and chipped flint tools—which are quite insignificant to the layman—as treasures, artists and art historians regard the statues of Jericho (which we have already mentioned) and the polychrome frescoes of Ghassul as of immense historical and aesthetic value. The first inhabitants of Ghassul, situated between Jericho and the north of the Dead Sea, were the contemporaries of the Amratian civilization of Egypt (which means that they lived around 3000 B.C.) and that of El Obeid in Mesopotamia. They built brick houses on stone foundations, and covered them with wooden roofs. Ghassul was destroyed by fire, so that little remains of the frescoes, but the extraordinary eight-pointed star<sup>1</sup> which is reproduced in Albright's book is far more beautiful and of far greater interest than the work which was being produced in Egypt and Mesopotamia during the same period. Study of the different motifs contained in this fresco, which was undoubtedly of religious or magical significance, has shown that the figure 8 continually recurs; it is traditionally the symbol of resurrection—even in Christian baptistries and baptismal fonts, which are more often than not eight-sided for the same reason. This brilliant star could thus represent the sun, which keeps life on earth and is itself reborn every morning after its death in the evening. The greater

<sup>1</sup> *The Archaeology of Palestine*, London, 1949, p. 67.



*Fig. 27 Eight-pointed star from a polychrome fresco at Ghassul*

part of the composition has been lost, thereby making it incomprehensible; associated with the star, however, are a number of figures which, though not very clear, are quite like ships and could therefore represent the solar bark which conveyed the dead over the waters of the underworld to the place of their resurrection: a theme which is to be observed very early in Egyptian art and which remained a constant symbol in the Nile Valley for thousands of years.

Other fragments of frescoes represent fantastic animals, birds and lavishly dressed human figures. The most forthright realism—in the illustrations of birds, for example—appears side by side with abstract geometrical designs; these are comparable with the ones on the funerary urns shaped like houses, which Sukenik found in cemeteries on the Plain of Sharon near Khudeiran.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE HITTITES AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

THE first appearance of the Hittites in archaeology, and by this I mean the first concrete evidence in the form of objects or images of a mysterious people who were unknown apart from Old Testament references and beyond those occasions when their destiny crossed that of the Hebrews, was in January, 1737; on that occasion, J. Otter, a Swede entrusted by the King of France with a mission in Turkey, found himself confronted by a bas-relief carved in the rock not far from the village of Ivriz where he had camped. The bas-relief represented a giant figure brandishing a sheaf of corn and carrying heavy bunches of grapes in his belt. Before this god, who was probably the god of fertility, there was a smaller figure, that of a king or a priest, making an offering and a sign of worship. An inscription in characters which were then completely unknown commented on the significance of the scene. In a report on his mission, Otter described this powerful and imposing piece of sculpture, but there was still no question of it being associated with the Hittites, on whom all definite information was then so slight, and the traveller attached no importance to it.

A half-century later, the scholars who went with Napoleon on his Egyptian campaign observed, on the walls of the temples of Thebes and Abu-Simbel, representations of an unknown people, physically very different from the Egyptians, against whom they had fought, and who had been defeated by the might of Ramses II at the famous battle of Kadesh; following this, the pharaoh married the daughter of the enemy king in order to consolidate the treaty which he had concluded with him—a treaty whose terms were to remain unknown until, thanks to Champollion's ingenuity and patience, the hieroglyphics were finally deciphered. The cuneiform writing of the Assyrians also had to be deciphered before it became possible to read the Mesopotamian texts which dealt with the Hatti or Hethceans.

That was the state of affairs when by a stroke of luck—the kind which seems to help archaeologists so providentially—a traveller by the name of Burckhardt was visiting the bazaar at Hamath in 1812 and noticed a stone in an otherwise ordinary wall; it caught his attention, he said, because it was covered with little figures and



Fig. 28 God of Fertility, bas-relief found near Ivriz

signs which seemed to belong to hieroglyphic writing although they were not like the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians. Nearly a century later, an English missionary, William Wright, who had probably read Burckhardt's *Travels in Syria*, went in search of the stone which his predecessor referred to, and had the good fortune to find five others in the walls of houses in Hamath; with the permission of the Pasha of the town, he was able to take casts of them. In the same year, a stone similar to those of Hamath was found in a wall of the Mosque at Aleppo; it was greatly venerated by the inhabitants who credited it with the power to heal inflammations of the eye. Observing that the stone to which they owed so much had aroused the interest of the *roumis* (Christians), the people of Aleppo were quick to remove it from sight to shield it from their greed and curiosity.

This was not a great deal but the way was now open for some important discoveries. When similarities were found between the characters on the inscriptions of Aleppo and Hamath and on the Ivriz bas-relief, all like inscriptions found on Hittite sites—where excavations were just beginning—were gathered together. In 1833 the French scholar, Charles Texier, had identified the ruins of Boghazköy, which preserved the ramparts and the monumental gates

guarded by lions, of Hattusas, the ancient Hittite capital. At Yazilikaya, which the natives drew to his attention because it contained a long procession (its name means "inscribed rock"), he examined a magnificent collection of sculpture. During the same period, the Englishman Hamilton studied the remains of another very important Hittite city, Alaca Höyük. The necessary impulse had now been given and Hittitology was to make rapid strides forward. In 1879, hieroglyphic inscriptions similar to those of Ivriz and Zenjirli were found at Carchemish, and at the beginning of this century, in 1900, Messerschmidt began publishing the *Corpus Inscriptionum Hittitarum*; this was not to take full effect until attempts to decipher the hieroglyphs—which Sayce of Oxford had begun in 1875—were at last to penetrate the mysteries of a language which, like the people who once expressed themselves through it, had held fast to its secrets.

Excavations and the work of epigraphists followed one another at an equal pace; as the astonishing sculpture through which Hittite genius found expression was classified, the inscribed tablets and the hieroglyphs carved on city walls and figured bas-reliefs were gathered together for the attempt to read them. These texts and images were to yield a truer, deeper insight into the character of the men whom the Bible calls the Sons of Heth and from whom David chose his warriors; the unfortunate Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, was a Hittite captain. Their women must have been very beautiful for David to commit the crime which destroyed Uriah, and for his son Solomon to choose many Hethian girls to fill his harem. There were some amazing discoveries like that of 13,000 tablets which made up the library or diplomatic archives of Boghazköy, a site finally identified by Chantre and Winkler as Hattusas, the old capital. Most of the tablets were not written in Hittites hieroglyphs but in cuneiform characters and in a Hittite language which it now became possible to read.

As they emerged from the darkness which had concealed them for thousands of years, the part which the Hittites played in the history of the peoples of the ancient world became increasingly clear. Their diplomatic correspondence with the Egyptian chancellery was found in the ruins of Tell el Amarna, the city of the Great Heretic, Akhnaton—an exchange of letters over the marriage of Egyptian princes and Hittite princesses, and vice versa. The remarkable thing to observe in the diplomatic correspondence between Tell el Amarna and Hattusas was that it was not conducted in the language of either of the parties concerned, but in a third language—Babylonian, which at this time must have been used universally for relations between courts and states; the cuneiform characters in which these documents were written were the ones already in

existence during the period of the third dynasty of Ur in Mesopotamia—towards the middle of the third millennium B.C.

The "Cappadocian tablets" found at Jara Höyük, the site of ancient Kanes, were beginning to be known at the end of the nineteenth century, but it was only in 1925 that Hrozny, having discovered the secret of the place where they were uncovered, excavated the ruins of the houses and saw hundreds of tablets still in their sealed clay containers, among the debris of Minoan pottery. Unlike those of Boghazköy and Tell el Amarna, these related to the private lives of individuals, usually Assyrian merchants, who were living there in colonies, as M. Delaporte very correctly points out; it was he who found the names of the gods of Ashur, and drew attention to the fact that the grammar and vocabulary are not Babylonian, as in official documents, but written in archaic Assyrian.

For a long time, the Hittite language remained a mystery to linguists, just as Cretan of the Minoan period, Maya and Etruscan still are. The problem which faces the epigraphist first of all is to read and identify the signs which are the characters of the writing, then to decipher it, and finally to transcribe from the unknown language into a language he knows. Where the Etruscans are concerned, though we know how the letters of their alphabet correspond with our own, apart from several proper nouns and a few words, we are unable to attribute any meaning to the phrases in which they occur. As for Cretan, the possibility of a solution is still open to question, though the problem has been put very clearly by Hrozny.

Documents were discovered on the archaeological sites of Asia Minor and Syria where Hittite remains were found, but how were they deciphered? The story of how the Hittite language became known to us shows that it presented as many difficulties and obstacles as Mesopotamian cuneiform or Egyptian hieroglyphs. All European countries, we may venture to say, shared the same enthusiasm in trying to decipher the tablets and rock inscriptions. The English with Sayce, the French with Contenau and Delaporte, the Germans with Winckler and Bossert, the Italians with Merigi, and the Czechs with Hrozny, all took an active part in a study which began less than half a century ago and has yielded such spectacular results that a considerable number of texts relating to religion, mythology, customs and laws have been read. The history of the Hittite people holds no more mysteries, and in so far as our modern ideas allow us to interpret it, their spiritual life is well known to us. Hrozny's first grammar of the Hittite language was published as early as 1915, but several corrections have been made to it, by Sommer in particular, and by Forrer, Cavaignac and Sturtevant.

In 1933 the latter brought out the *Grammaire comparative de la langue Hittite*, four years after *Les Eléments de grammaire Hittite* by Delaporte. It was in 1940 that a summary was made of grammatical studies in Friedrich's *Ethitisches Elementarbuch*. If there is no longer any doubt concerning Hittite texts written in Accadian characters, the transcription of hieroglyphs still retains something of the adventurous and polemical quality which it had from the beginning.

First let us examine the tablets written in Accadian, which in this period was the language of science and diplomacy, just as Latin was in Medieval Europe; they do not offer any difficulties because Accadian is now well known. But beside these official documents in the international language of the time, Boghazköy has yielded some tablets inscribed with cuneiform characters, yet in a language which was not Accadian and was still unknown to epigraphists.

In 1913, a group of German linguists (together with Hrozny) tackled the unknown language, which held out the prospect of remaining so for a long time because no bilingual document like the Rosetta stone, the key to Egyptian hieroglyphs, had been found. Indeed, it is only a bilingual document which can provide definite equivalents without leaving any room for doubt. Fortunately, among all the thousands of tablets there were Accado-Hittite dictionaries of a kind used by the scribes attached to the royal chancellery. But this only shed light on a few words. On the basis of diplomatic letters in the archives of Amenophis IV at Tell el Amarna, Knudtson opened a door by suggesting that Hittite must have been an Indo-European language. Hrozny was unabashed by the criticism which the semantic world levelled at Knudtson for a suggestion which it regarded as foolhardy; he boldly applied the methods of comparative linguistics to the translation of a sentence which later served as a key, and observed its similarities with different Indo-European languages.

Thus, the Hittite sentence, "*Nu ninda-an ezzateni vadar-ma ekutteni*," finally gave: "Now you eat bread and you drink water." The deciphering process itself is very interesting because it illustrates a phonetic mechanism common to Indo-European languages. It contained an ideogram which means bread, solid food, and which was written *ninda* in Sumerian. Hrozny went on from there and produced the following argument which I shall reproduce as it was summarized by Contenau: "Bread we know; *an* is no doubt a case ending; the idea of eating comes to mind. Now *ezza* reminds us of *ezzan* which means 'to eat' in Old High German. From other passages, *teni* seemed to Hrozny like an ending of the second person plural. And *nu* was surely like the English 'now'. Thus the meaning emerged, 'Now you eat bread'. The second



clause seems similar to the first inasmuch as *ma* in Accadian is an enclitic which joins the parts of the sentence; *vadar* reminds us of 'water' or old Saxon 'watar', from which it follows that *ekutteni* could be 'you drink'; sure enough another text yielded *akuwanna* for comparison with 'aqua', water, and this must have meant drink. The sentence as a whole became: 'Now you eat bread and you drink water.'<sup>1</sup>

Having recourse to different modern languages to interpret a text several thousand years old, and unknown into the bargain, may seem a dangerous practice because it leaves too much room for theory and conjecture, but it proved a valid and effective one. Hrozný was criticized for his lack of caution, for the dangerous speed with which his work progressed, and above all for leaving too much to intuition and the comparative approach. In a chapter in his book on the earliest migrations of peoples and the riddle of proto-Indian civilization, the Czech scholar revealed his technique; this chapter was added as an appendix to his *Histoire de l'Asie antérieure de l'Inde et de la Grèce jusqu'au début du second millénaire*.<sup>2</sup> I feel it would be useful at this point to quote a passage which teaches a lesson in patience and persistence, two necessary qualities for the archaeologist.

"In my own field of learning at least—the study of the languages and history of the ancient East—I do not accept that any scientific problem is insoluble. Every inscription, every eastern text, even the most baffling one, must have a simple meaning which can finally be worked out. I am unable to relax my efforts until I find that meaning. I read and re-read the inscription, possibly two or three hundred times over, and keep looking for the sign or clue, however small it may be, which will enable me to extract an over-all meaning at least. . . . Having browsed over an incalculable number of ancient eastern texts in the course of my life, I have immersed myself in them and grasped not only their content but their tone and the whole outlook of the ancient East—to such an extent that I could even write them myself. Equipped in this way, I approach the text which has to be deciphered with the firm conviction that nothing of my own must be introduced into it, that I must submit to it completely, yield to it as it were, and identify myself with it; having accepted the independent existence of the text I must become absorbed in its spiritual orbit as directly as possible. This attitude of inner surrender to a text is for me the basic method for finding its meaning."

This method of linking the intuitive impulse with the cautious

<sup>1</sup> G. Contenau, *La Civilisation des Hittites et des Mitanniens*, Paris, Payot, 1934.  
L. Delaporte, *Les Hittites*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Bedrich Hrozný, Paris, Payot, 1947.

progress of rigorously scientific analysis has, as we have seen, yielded excellent results in deciphering Hittite texts where Mesopotamian cuneiform was used. The problem became infinitely more complicated where the inscriptions were not written in cuneiform but in hieroglyphs—when we realize that these had no more to do with Egyptian hieroglyphs than they had with ancient Chinese pictograms, Maya glyphs or the so far unexplained signs of the “talking woods” on Easter Island.

In the country of the Hittites, as everywhere else, it seems clear that the pictograph (or representation of an object by its image) preceded the ideograph (already the outcome of an abstract intellectual process) and was most certainly earlier than the alphabetical symbol, which is a pure convention. The transition from the pictograph to the abstract symbol took the same course in China and Mesopotamia, but the pictographic hieroglyph undoubtedly came first. The Hittites used hieroglyphs for writing on their monuments, thereby giving their inscriptions an appearance of solemnity; it was for this reason that hieroglyphs were retained for sacred writing in Egypt long after demotic and cursive writing (themselves distortions of hieroglyphic pictographs) had come into general use. But the link, which at Boghazköy was provided in cuneiform by the character itself, was lacking. At this stage the alternatives were ignorance or theory. It had none the less been possible to discover the direction in which an inscription should be read, for the figures and objects represented in the pictographs were turned to face the way in which the sentence developed, and the writing was of a type quite common in antiquity and known as *boustrophedon*.

The fact that no bilingual text could be found was a source of great disappointment but it was observed that the imprint of a seal on a silver blade bore the image of a man (who could also have been a god), and around him there were hieroglyphic signs similar to those seen in inscriptions: running round the seal and enclosing both the image and hieroglyphs, was a text written in cuneiform which, one could reasonably assume, was the translation of the hieroglyphs. This seal, which is known as the bull of Tarkondemos, was unfortunately lost, and all that remained was an impression in which the cuneiform was rather blurred and misshapen—unless it was originally drawn by a clumsy or careless scribe. Sayce devoted several years to this enigma, and finally arrived at the following translation: “I am Tarriktimme, king of the country of the city.” Tarkondemos, Tarriktimme, Tarqmuwa . . . this was the same man who was known to have ruled the land of Mira during the reign of Suppiluliuma.

This was not a great deal; the seal only had six hieroglyphs and

six cuneiform symbols. But could Sayce's conclusions be regarded as wholly convincing? Hrozny did not seem to think so. "For a long time," he wrote, "it was mistakenly thought that this seal gave some hope for finding the key to Hittite hieroglyphs."<sup>1</sup> With the progress made so far, and Gurney has summarized this, there is still no agreement on the nature of the language represented by these pictographs, which are extremely varied, and include the shapes of animals, houses, plants, furniture and men. Taking one of these symbols as a basis for the contention, it was argued that it belonged to the Satem language; other scholars associate it with Luvite or Palaic, or Tabalic according to Forrer, which reminds us of Tubal in the Bible. We cannot go into detail about these theories here; but our survey of them should be sufficient to indicate how complicated the problem is and how far we seem to be from finding a solution to it.

Though we do not have many texts to give us indisputable facts about the religious, intellectual, social and moral life of the Hittites, we do have a considerable number of works of art to attest the might of this people, and their sense of greatness, strength and nobility. The bas-reliefs which decorated the gates and palaces of the great Hittite cities show a feeling for form which was the outcome of simplicity and forcefulness, and was very different from that of the Egyptians, Mesopotamians or Greeks. In the art of the Hittites we meet an undeniably original conception of beauty, and this in spite of the sustained and important ties which they had with the Nile valley and the Fertile Crescent. On the other hand, Hittite artists exercised a lasting influence on the neighbouring nations of Asia Minor. In the bronze objects found at Höyük, whether the images are of a stag covered with mysterious symbols or of the "solar wheels" not unlike those found in northern Europe, we can recognize the prototypes of the bronzes of Luristan.

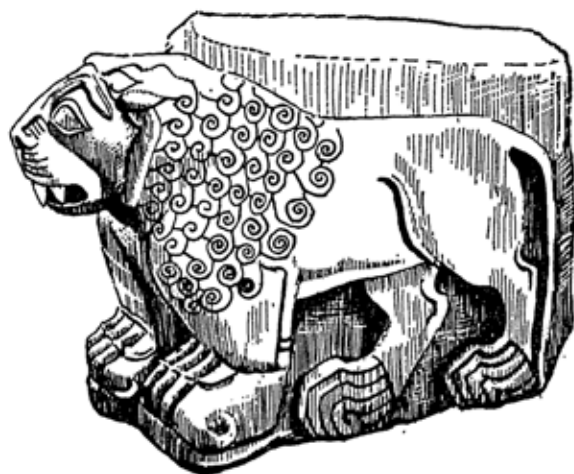
It is not impossible that the Etruscans, whose origins are unknown, as we must remember, and who already possessed a highly evolved civilization when they first made their appearance in Italy, had relations with the Hittites before the migrations which brought them to Europe. Between these two almost equally mysterious peoples, we find certain features in common. The Hittites, for example, practised soothsaying, and consulted the liver of sacrificed animals—a custom also observed among the Etruscans who had gone far in the art of reading omens and actually taught it to the Romans. Certain parts of the liver were under the influence of certain gods or spirits, and according to the condition of those parts, their favourable or unfavourable action could be forecast. Would-be soothsayers acquired the skill by means of bronze, terra-cotta or stone models of

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de l'Asie antérieure*, previously quoted.

a liver divided into sections, each of which was assigned to a particular portent. The fact that at Piacenza in Italy and at Boghazköy in Asia Minor, very similar liver models have been found, proves that Etruscan and Hittite soothsayers practised the same methods. That these methods had a single source and were passed on to the Etruscans by the Hittites is a conclusion which has nothing rash about it and even seems likely.

Can a similar resemblance be found between Etruscan and Hittite sculpture? We should not take the comparison too far; if the Etruscans gained much from Asia Minor, they entered very soon into the atmosphere of Greek civilization and received the strongest impression from it. They broke away from what they had learned in Asia Minor as soon as they yielded to the Hellenic genius. We should really turn to Mesopotamia for analogies with Hittite art, though it always remained tightly bound by the individual character of the people who created it. When we study the great Hittite bas-reliefs of Maras, Zenjirli, Karatepe, Tell-Halaf, Carchemish or Malatya, to quote only some of the most important sites, we are struck by the violent intensity and the almost ferocious vitality which gives life to the short, muscular figures, and the animals gathering themselves as though in perpetual readiness to spring. Despite the inevitable hieratical quality which freezes the processions of priests and warriors as they make their way towards the king or god, extreme and forthright naturalism remains one of the most prominent features of Hittite art. Scenes of war or sacrifice, battles, and the retinues of priests or princes show the same restraint, the same contracted energy which is constantly at the ready to explode into action. Again one finds an extraordinary dynamic quality in the fast walk, almost a run, of the warrior-kings in the bas-reliefs of Gaour-Kalessi, in Central Anatolia; it calls to mind the king of Karabel and the frieze of priests at Yazilikaya not far from Smyrna—one of the first works of Hittite art to draw the attention of archaeologists.

Since the far-off days when the chance discovery of a rock carving on a hillside or an inscribed stone in a wall sent scholars on the track of an unknown people, immense progress has been, and is still being, made. The number of Hittite sites which have been surveyed, excavated and prepared for tourists to admire them is constantly increasing. Carchemish, Zenjirli, Tell Ahmar, Chatal Höyük, Skaje Guezi and Tell Halaf in Syria; Höyük, Alishar, Alaca and Boghazköy in Asia Minor have been carefully cleared and give us a full conception of the layout of the Hittites' cities and fortresses, their building methods, and their artistic and aesthetic techniques during the various periods of their history. It is a very long one, for it goes back to a time before the Indo-European invasions, and ends



*Fig. 29 Lion from Malatya*

with the taking of Carchemish by the Assyrians of Sargon II at the end of the eighth century B.C.; this finally put an end to all the tiny Syro-Hittite states surviving the collapse of the true Hittite empire, which had been swept away by the Indo-European surge.

Archaeologists and aestheticians, basing their theories on stylistic features, have virtually reached agreement in dating the most important Hittite sculptural work, which provides the main substance of their art; for pottery and bronze objects are quite rare, and no paintings—if indeed there ever were any—have come down to us. In the style and technique of their sculpture, whether in bas-reliefs or statues in the round, we can distinguish three great periods in the history of this people.

The earliest stretches from the time when the Hittites are first observed in Syria and Asia Minor, up to the coming of the Indo-Europeans. Excavations at Gourma in Lycia, at Kizil Ova in Pisidia, and at Yumek Tepe, show that there was a prehistoric civilization of Mousterian type; Aurignacian flint tools have also been found in the valley of Tshakkal, and as far back as 1933, near Malatya, Przyluski found remains of the megalithic civilization which appears to have spread over Europe and Asia during a period impossible to determine with any accuracy.

The earliest Hittites, those referred to as the Proto-Hittites, were probably settlers who merged with the aborigines. Historians think of them as Asianic; this is the term under which the inhabitants of West Asia who were neither Semites nor Indo-Europeans have been

grouped. They are also sometimes known as Japhetites. Ethnically and culturally neither Semitic nor Aryan, the Asianics were the brachycephalic, and large-nosed people whom we see on Hittite bas-reliefs—the remote ancestors, it would seem, of the modern Armenians.

Over this first layer of civilization (we are not taking prehistoric remains into account as they tell us little about the inhabitants of Asia Minor in the dim days of the palaeolithic age) there came the great race—or wave of races—of the Indo-Europeans, who were traditionally held to have come down from Pamir, but are more likely to have descended from the great plains of Russia. At all events, these plains appear to have been the rallying point for the invasion before it broke up into several streams, each of which followed its own course. One made its way towards Western Europe, another through the Balkans as far as Greece, and yet another, driving south, came to a halt in Iran.

Mainly linguistic data which we possess would allow us to assume that even before the mighty invasion of the Indo-Europeans in the second millennium, there had already been sporadic inroads, for well before this period, it is possible to detect Aryan elements in the languages of the Mitannians and Kassites. Be that as it may, the invaders who were to settle in Asia Minor appear to have crossed the Caucasus in their march south, according to Weil and Meyer, or made their way along the Bosphorus, if we accept the view of Cowley and Przeworski. Indo-Europeans and Proto-Hittites merged almost completely until the time when the aboriginal elements and those resulting from the early inroads were supplanted by the newcomers.

Reflecting on the extraordinary intermingling of civilizations which resulted when so many peoples were set in motion—either unwillingly or by choice—and were brought headlong into contact with one another, we can appreciate all the more readily how motley and full of contradictions such a mixture must have been. Hittite art, throughout the course of its development—which means all the way through its three periods: Early, Indo-European and Syrian—offers a display of variations on the basic and abiding theme of the Hittite aesthetic and this can be recognized in statues and bas-reliefs: the physical type is short, thickset and large nosed; characteristic clothing consists of long pointed shoes, pointed caps and pleated robes; the sculptural relief is forceful and simplified, conveying, both in men and animals, an impression of extraordinary strength.

Active excavational work, the stylistic analysis of the works of art it yields and the deciphering and translation of inscriptions or tablets, have taught us even more than we could have hoped for

thirty years ago about the origins and character of the Hittite people. Sites like Mersin, Alaca or Karatepe, which were either new or inadequately studied until now, have been the scene of some very important research in recent years. Professor Garstang, who was appointed Director of the British Institute in Ankara in 1947, crowned the work of forty years with his excavations at Mersin in the plain of Cilicia, where more than a hundred different sites were listed and surveyed, and where there are cultural layers going back to 3600 B.C. But although they do not bring us into historical times, we should also bear in mind the neolithic layers excavated by Burkitt; these are at least two thousand years older. These excavations brought to light some curious examples of pottery similar to a type found at Alalakh in the region of Aleppo, where Woolley had examined several mounds (*höyük*s) rich in interesting remains, and at Tell Atchana, where pottery of Mersian type has been found with flint and obsidian tools.

If these various excavation campaigns have given us a better knowledge of the proto-Hittite period and prehistoric times in Asia Minor, Karatepe in the plain of Adana yielded the remains of an important neo-Hittite city. Amongst its treasures we should particularly draw attention to the sculpture, which deviates from the usual Hittite style and shows very interesting signs of Greek influence. As well as sculpture of Aegean type, some inscriptions were uncovered which relate to a people variously referred to as the Danuna and Danauna; these might well be the Danaoi mentioned in the *Iliad* as allies of the Achaeans in their war against Troy. We should remember, in this connection, that as early as 1903, Myres found at Troy itself, in the layer known as Troy I (the site is known to have seven successive layers) the fragments of a pottery which he called Anatolian and which is the same as that found at Karatepe.

Thanks to the sculpture in which they are represented, and to texts and inscriptions which enable us to enter into their everyday life, and sometimes into their political life and religious beliefs, the Hittites are no longer an unknown people referred to in a verse of the Bible. Today we even know something of the jokes of their roguish god, Telepinu, who, like Greek Dionysos, was god of wine: he hides himself when drunk, with the result that life on earth is in danger of coming to an end, and all the gods have to unite to make this impudent colleague see the error of his ways: he becomes both the guardian of fertility and lord of the underworld. We also know of the metal cauldron in which Telepinu is placed as a punishment for his misdeeds. Indeed, we know enough about the Hittite pantheon to distinguish the various gods and their respective attributes.

One of the most curious of these deities is the stag-god; he appears



Fig. 30 *Bronze statue representing Runda, the stag-god*

to have been introduced by the Indo-Europeans for he occurs among the Celtic and Germanic peoples—descendants also of the invaders who came down from the Russian plains and merged with the aboriginals. "The Indo-Europeans were struck by the beauty of the stag and the shape of his antlers, and they made him a god, the stag-god who was held in great reverence."<sup>1</sup> A bronze figurine found at Höyük represents a stag covered with circles and crosses, which are symbols of the sun. Runda the stag-god must thus have been assimilated to a solar deity in the same way that Tarhund was the god of the storm: these two shared the privilege of being the chief gods of the Hittites and of watching over the game of dice, which must have been a religious ceremony, a divination rite and probably an ordinary game as well; the dice which have been found on Hittite sites bear the same signs as the bronze stag-god of Höyük.

<sup>1</sup> Riemenschneider, *Le Monde des Hittites*, Corréa, 1955, p. 74.



Today it is particularly intriguing to find that the pantheon which vanished from Asia Minor with the Empire destroyed by Sargon II has been perpetuated in Europe. The god of the storm, slayer of dragons, became Siegfried des Niebelungen, and Saint George in the legends of Christianity. As for Runda the stag-god, he became Saint Hubert, the patron of huntsmen. "Just as the stag of Saint Hubert carries a crucifix between his antlers, the stag-god of Höyük has another stag between his horns. The study of ancient civilizations has revealed this myth as perennially recurring. The Hittite god of sport did not lose his emblems either; his knuckle-bones became Saint Hubert's key, which, in the Middle Ages, was placed on the heads of hunting hounds to protect them from rabies. The astragalos, the knuckle-bone of ancient times, simply became transformed into a key; legend invents nothing new; it preserves what the past hands down to it. The knuckle-bone which gave its shape to the Hittite silver bar and was to become one of the emblems of Jupiter Dolichenus, a descendant of the Anatolian stag-god, was also the model for a pictogram commonly used in Hittite hieroglyphics."

These survivals are even more strikingly confirmed at Höyük when we examine the huge statues on either side of the so-called Sphinx gate, which dates from the New Kingdom; on the inner face of one of these gate-posts there is a figure which has become familiar through European heraldry: this is the double-headed eagle, with its wings spread and wearing a crown, the symbol of Runda, who is here represented, not as a stag or a hunter, but as a bird of prey holding a hare in its talons. This symbol, which imperial coats of arms took as their main component during the Middle Ages, and which they retained for centuries until they vanished with the empires they represented, was not, of course, introduced into Europe by the Hittites, but was the common property of different civilizations which had sprung from the same source.

Archaeologists also readily emphasize the influence which was exerted on domestic architecture in ancient times by the Hittite house of the type known as *bet-hilani*, "a building consisting of an entrance hall with a colonnade in front of it and—most important—a specially shaped pavilion with windows on the first floor so that anyone keeping watch had a clear view of those approaching". *Bet-hilani*, in fact, means "house with windows". Hrozný, having studied the layout of Hittite palaces, concludes from his examination of the ruins of the great royal buildings of Boghazköy that, just as the stag-god developed into Jupiter Dolichenus and then into Saint Hubert, so they provided the original form for the Cretan palace, for the labyrinth which was the dwelling of the Minotaur—a Cretan deity no doubt, but as Hrozný thinks, one who had his origins in

Asia Minor. The cult of the bull, which spread to all the shores of the Mediterranean in antiquity, and of which the Minotaur may well have been one aspect, is universally associated with the myth of death and resurrection. It was by sprinkling themselves with the blood of the bull that the worshippers of Mithras were reborn to a supernatural and spiritual life which can be compared to the life gained by Christians through baptism with water.

If sculpture has taught us something of the nature and characteristics of Hittite gods, the texts inscribed on bas-reliefs and tablets have enabled us to grasp the elements basic to the religious thought of a people in contact, as we have seen, with Israel and Egypt. It is therefore not surprising to find that in the prayers of King Mursil I, one of the greatest rulers of the Old Empire (he lived *circa* 1800 B.C.), who conquered Aleppo and Babylon, and took the Babylonian gods captive to his capital at Hattusas, there is a curious spiritual kinship with a pharaoh like Akhnaton and a Jewish prophet like Job.

From a psychological standpoint, it is interesting to observe that Mursil, in his prayers, denies having sinned and laments at being punished for the sins of his ancestors: "God of the storm of Hatti, my lord, and you gods, my lords, it is thus: there has been sinning. My father also sinned. He transgressed the words of the god of the storm of Hatti, my lord, and I, I have sinned in nothing. And thus it is: the sin of the father is visited upon the son. Upon me is visited the sin of my father.<sup>1</sup> Thus have I confessed it to the god of the storm of Hatti, and to the gods, my lords; this is, we have done it. Since I have confessed the sin of my father, may the spirit of the god of the storm, my lord, be pacified . . ."<sup>2</sup>

If the double-headed eagle of the Russian Empire and the Empire of the Habsburgs occurs so early in the sculpture of the Hittites, it is not difficult to accept that King Mursil knew the same agony of mind which led Kierkegaard as a child, not to pacify but to challenge the storm god—or perhaps we should simply say God. Agony of mind occurs in every country and in every age. It is something inseparable from the human condition, whatever form it may be given by a ruler of Asia Minor who lived in the days of Ramses II, or a Danish philosopher of the nineteenth century.

The history of the Hittites is a very complex one, for it is closely bound up with that of the great powers, Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria; the lords of Asia Minor always had a relationship of some kind with them—either through war, which brought them into conflict, or sometimes through ties of friendship and even alliance.

<sup>1</sup> Mursil II's father was the famous Suppiluliuma, a contemporary of Amenophis IV, Pharaoh of Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> Riemenschneider, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

Were it not that this survey covering many centuries must necessarily be brief, it would be interesting to consider how far the Hittites and their civilization could have been influenced by the activities of neighbouring peoples like the Gargas and the Mitannians; but we must restrict ourselves to tracing the broad outline of a curve which emerges from the darkness of prehistoric times and endures up to the beginning of our own reckoning: if indeed Asia Minor has lately yielded many remains from the age of the chipped stone, and on the very sites where Hittite cities were later to rise, in Comagena, in the first century A.D., we find hieroglyphic inscriptions which prove that this form of writing was used, possibly as a ritual tradition and at least in religious and official documents.

In the seventeenth century B.C., in the part of Asia Minor which corresponds with modern Anatolia and was to become the seat of the Hittite Empire—we are retaining the term "Empire" although, as we shall see, it is not strictly accurate—we find a state which was founded by King Pithana, with its capital at Kussur first of all, and later at Hattusas or modern Boghazköy. With Pithana's successors—Anitta and Tudalia I—the little state consisting of a group of feudal principalities was strengthened and enlarged by neighbouring City-States which became bound to it by a treaty of alliance for defence and offence; when Labarna ascended the throne in 1710 B.C., his military and economic resources were sufficient for him to consolidate the territory he acquired and to leave his son Hattusil I with a mighty political and war machine which carried conflict into Babylonia under Mursil I, and in 1530 B.C., even gained control of its capital.

The Hittites were now a power to be reckoned with. They set up a barrier to the ambitions of the Mitannians, they advanced up to the frontiers of Syria, and from the sixteenth to the fourteenth centuries B.C. they were constantly expanding as they strengthened their internal unity. Indeed, we should not forget that this unity could only be maintained under the sway of the king, for the Hittite "Empire" was really a confederation of states; the ties which bound them to one another only became firm when they were secured by a strong ruler who could make himself feared. The king, moreover, was ever obliged to affirm his name and power in the *pankus*, a kind of parliament where the nobles assembled to approve his actions and decide on the succession. A constitution and a code regulated the relationships between classes and private citizens, and this was such a liberal arrangement that the king, far from being absolute, was often paralysed in his internal and military expansionist policies by the unruliness of the nobles. Telepinu was the first to establish the principle of succession to the throne and of dynastic continuity

(*circa* 1500 B.C.) so that he, Tudalia II, Hantili I and Alluwana were finally able to pursue the "policy of greatness" which reached its zenith under Suppiluliuma I (1375-1335).

The conquests of this remarkable ruler, thanks to his determination and his qualities as a general and administrator, took the Hittite "Empire" all the way to the Upper Tigris and along the Orontes to Kadesh. His must have been an exceptionally powerful personality for Amenophis III not to protest at his encroachments in a Syrian region where Egyptian dominion seemed almost unshakable, and for the wife of Tutankhamen to write to him when her husband died, requesting him to send one of his sons so that she might marry him and make him master of Egypt. Half a century later the union still held firm, and war with Egypt reached its peak with the victory of the Hittites at Kadesh in 1296 B.C. when Ramses II, with the greatest difficulty, succeeded in saving the remnants of his vast army from being completely wiped out. Peace was finally made between Hattusil II and Ramses II by an exchange of royal marriages; the daughter of the King of Hattusa himself entered the harem of the Pharaoh in about 1280 B.C.

The victories of the Achaeans in the Mediterranean, the growing power of Assyria, and internal troubles fomented by an unruly nobility who took courage from the disorder, finally sapped the strength of the Empire, which weak rulers like Arnuwanta III, and Suppiluliuma II were incapable of defending. The Phrygians, the Gargas and the Mushki, foreign invaders put to flight by the huge migrations which occurred *circa* 1200 B.C., or vassals encouraged by the weakening power of the throne, succeeded in breaking up the Hittite Empire. Hattusa was burned in 1200; the Assyrians became master of one part of the country and the rest reverted to the anarchic division of traditional feudalism. Yet if the Hittite state no longer existed as such, Hittite civilization, with its religion, customs and laws, continued to thrive in the city-states of Northern Syria and Cilicia. The magnificent remains which have been found at Karatepe, Zenjirli and Carchemish in particular date from the period when Hittite power survived the destruction of its Empire for nearly five centuries, proving thereby that the Hittites were a cultural force even more than they were a political and military one. It was only in 700 B.C. that the last city-states with Hittite traditions were seized by the Assyrians, embodied in their Empire and fused with their civilization, despite all the pressure exerted on them for five centuries by the foreign peoples with whom they merged and whom they continued to dominate, none the less, through their superior art and culture.

If we study the civilization of the Hittites, which remained almost

unchanged from the quasi-legendary time of Pithana, *circa* 1900 B.C., up to the extinction of their thought in the Syrian cities which were finally crushed by the Assyrians, we find that their success in war was due to their superior handling of iron in making weapons and chariots: indeed, the chariots of the Hittites inflicted many defeats on those of the Egyptians, which were nevertheless widely renowned. Their political supremacy was due to their laws, which were a great improvement on those regulating relationships between individuals in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Even the slaves of the Hittites had a status, and their codes, especially those of Telepinu (1525-1500) and Mursil II (1334-1306), were inspired by a humanity which was lacking elsewhere. Their prestige was also based on the fact that they were amiably tolerant in accepting the gods of the peoples they conquered, and allowing them a place in their pantheon—already so over-populated that the Hittites were described as the people with the thousand gods. Similarly, they respected the customs, language and traditions of their vassals; they were careful to refrain from humiliating the peoples they conquered or reducing them to bondage, and wisely made a point of treating them as allies who had entered the confederation of their own free will.

Thanks to their broadmindedness and their "modern" conception of the way in which power should be exercised—so different from the ideas which generally prevailed in the ancient east—for nearly a century the Hittites were able to triumph over the obstacles which the composite nature of their state had occasioned and the constantly menacing greed and ambition of their mighty neighbours.

Archaeologists and philologists deserve all credit for the way in which the Hittites have been restored to life. As the sites of ancient Hittite power were excavated, their texts, scant at first but later more numerous, were studied and identified as private contracts, diplomatic and legal documents, as well as prayers, supplications and epic poems. Thanks to work of this kind, we can now learn the history of the Hittites in the same way that we learn that of the Greeks and Romans. What was once wrapt in mystery is now common knowledge, and sites whose very names we did not know are now famous as monuments to the glory of ancient and long lost capitals.

An abundance of precious texts restored this splendour when, at Karatepe, Hrozny discovered a tumulus covering the ruins of ancient Kanesh. There he found some interesting pieces of sculpture, vases curiously like certain types of Minoan pottery, and most important of all, a brick building dating from *circa* 2100 B.C. where the archives were stored; in it there were business letters, agreements, contracts and records. There were more than a thousand

tablets, some of them still in the sealed clay containers which preserved them and ensured that they were not tampered with. These so-called Cappadocian tablets are now one of our most valuable sources of information on early Hittite civilization. At Alishar, excavated from 1927 by the Chicago Oriental Institute, pottery similar to that of Kultepe was found and this was clearly of the same period; the forms by which it is distinguished—bottles and jugs—appear to be in imitation of metal originals and possess a red polish which is quite beautiful.

Boghazköy is a very much more important site. Situated in a loop of the Halys, it was first explored by a Frenchman, Chantre, and then by German archaeologists of the *Deutsche Oriental Gesellschaft*. Its vast, well preserved ruins offer a typical view of a Hittite city during the great period of cultural achievement. With their gates and towers, the ramparts of the temples, palaces and stores preserve the monumental and very characteristic appearance of the local architecture. "Whilst the Assyrians did not use foundations in their architecture," wrote M. Contenau in a book to which we must constantly refer when speaking of the Hittites,<sup>1</sup> "and only placed a layer of stones at the foot of their walls to protect them from the damp of the soil, Hittite architecture embodied foundations which were driven well into the ground." The same difference manifests itself when we study the plentiful carved bas-reliefs of Boghazköy: "The Assyrian bas-relief is carved on a fairly thin plaque and this is applied to the wall which is being decorated like a facing. The Hittite bas-relief was part of the building: it was a block in the lower course of the wall and carved on one of its faces; it could not be removed without causing a gap in the structure."

The basic character of Hittite art (we shall examine it later on) manifests itself in the restrained, severe and monumental quality which gives life to all its creations. It is architecture which holds sway, and nothing related to it, not even decoration, is ever divided from its function, or—one could say—from its functional quality. There is a graphic and quite racy element in Hittite sculpture, but its dominating feature is a feeling for large masses; their treatment is always simple in conception, always with an architectural sensibility, and with no loss of original purpose in concession to a taste for ornamentation.

The bas-reliefs of Yazilikaya, which are not far from Boghazköy, conform to the same aesthetic idea. They depict a procession and are carved on the walls of two rock galleries. Possibly the scene represents a pageant of gods; it could also be interpreted as a record of historical events. Whatever it may be, marriage of gods or a

<sup>1</sup> *La Civilisation des Hittites et des Mitanniens*, Paris, Payot, 1935, p. 194.

meeting of princes, this sculpture provides one of the most interesting examples of Hittite art; in its treatment of fabrics and faces, in its embellishments, and in the weapons carried by the figures—all of which are like those represented on seals. What is most striking is the atmosphere of untroubled majesty and grandeur which prevails over the members of the procession, in their folded robes and tall tiaras, grave and meditative as they ride in allegory on symbolic animals, following one another with solemn tread where temple ritual and the protocol of the courts dictate. But an article published by E. Laroche in 1952 ("The Pantheon of Yazilikaya")<sup>1</sup> would suggest that the sculpture is Hurrian and not Hittite.

Höyük belongs to the same region as Boghazköy and Yazilikaya, but the discoveries made there by Chantre, and later by Macridy, reveal an aesthetic approach which is quite different. Sometimes one is inclined to feel that they show the marks of Central Asian or Chinese influence—in the extraordinary vitality which asserts itself in the remarkable bas-relief of acrobats, for example, and in the treatment of animals. Their special importance lies in the fact that, within the fundamental homogeneity of Hittite art, they show variations which are due, not only to differences of period, but undoubtedly to alien contributions as well; these are still difficult to determine because our information about the neighbours of the Hittites, and the migrations which may have brought them into contact with races of widely differing backgrounds, is still indefinite. The bas-reliefs of Höyük therefore represent one of the most intriguing chapters in the aesthetic history of a people whose origins are doubtful and whose fortunes must have varied considerably during the centuries before they settled in the country where we find them.

The main interest of excavation in the country of the Hittites stems from the different problems which each site sets—without always providing the solution to be desired. The reason for this is that our knowledge covers only a part of Hittite history, in the same way that it covers only a part of that of the Etruscans; and like Etruscan civilization, the civilization of the Hittites already appears complete, with all essential characteristics, and yielding no information about the lengthy process which brought it so far. At Arslan Tepe, for example, excavations by M. Delaporte on the site of Melidia have brought to light a city which was founded in about the middle of the third millennium and abandoned by its inhabitants for reasons unknown. Among these ruins, M. Delaporte identified those of the palace of King Sulumili; its gates, decorated with lions and bas-reliefs representing the king and queen making a

<sup>1</sup> In the *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*.



sacrifice to the god Teshub, were in a good state of preservation. Assyrian influence is evident here, especially in scenic composition, but the treatment is still different. The relief shows economy and a vigorously expressive forcefulness. The episodes shown in the bas-reliefs most often relate to events in real life and therefore provide useful information about rites, manners and customs in a part of the Hittite Empire which appears to have escaped Anatolian influence. The most interesting one, both for its aesthetic value and the illustration which it offers of a literary text, shows the mighty god killing the great serpent Illuyanka in a tempest which expresses the essential being of this dread divinity, the author of storms and of the elemental forces unleashed against man.

Sakje-Geuzi, which was excavated by Garstang, contains the ruins of several successive settlements. Among them we find various stages of proto-Hittite and Hittite civilization in which the remains of the earliest period are side by side with those of the great period which gave Carchemish, Zenjirli, and Boghazköy. We can only mention the other sites where archaeological research has been carried out, not because their yields were unimportant—far from it—but because a tiresomely detailed account would swamp the names of places where Hittite civilization was best preserved beneath those of lesser interest. We must therefore limit ourselves to references to Tell-Ahmar, where M. Thureau Dangin's excavations brought some interesting monuments to light, to Has-Höyük, where M. Delaporte found a substantial amount of pottery, to Gaour-Kalissi, to Kisil-Dagh, and so on, until finally we come to the great centres of Hittite culture, Carchemish and Zenjirli.

Since 1914, Carchemish, on the site of the modern village of Jerablus, on the right bank of the Euphrates, is one of the cities most methodically and successfully excavated. Unlike so many other Hittite towns, it shows evidence of very great antiquity and has many layers rising above one another. The ruins are so complicated that several theories have been advanced to explain their origins and date them. Sir Leonard Woolley<sup>1</sup> saw in them the remains of a neolithic people, followed by another race who knew how to use bronze and buried their dead in their own homes. According to Hogarth the early civilization was probably Mesopotamian in origin and contains no Hittite elements at all. Be that as it may, the two civilizations would seem to be so clearly separated from one another that some explain this by a flood. The newcomers cremated their dead, and if, in fact, it was an invasion of the Sea Peoples which destroyed the first settlement, the one by which it was replaced after an indeterminate period had elapsed shows a far higher

<sup>1</sup> *Karkemish*, London, 1921.



degree of civilization. Thus, Carchemish probably became a Hittite city at quite a late stage, and this would explain the "not very pronounced Hittite character" which Dr. Contenau sees in it. Different materials were used in the architecture—obviously the ones which the region could command—but these were sufficient to give its monuments quite a distinctive appearance; yet the plan for dwellings still remained that of the *bet hilani* which became characteristic of all Hittite towns. "The building materials, for the most part, were sun-dried bricks; to make them, a little straw and clay were mixed, and they were bound with a mortar made from clay and water. The bricks usually rested on stone foundations consisting of either heaped quarry-stones or gravel; the foundations were usually filled with gravel or crushed quarry-stones and the outer faces were made of blocks which were squared and well bonded; this bonding was often *en coussinet* during the Middle Hittite period, whilst in the later period the stones were rectangular. It was on foundations like these that the courses of bricks were laid. When the outer face of the foundations was not carved, limestone was normally used; when these plinths, which are also known as orthostats, were carved, a block of limestone normally alternated with a block of basalt and thus gave a very decorative black and white alternating effect."<sup>1</sup>

The sculpture of Carchemish is probably the most remarkable work of this kind which the Hittites produced. The finest specimens are those dating from the second millennium; their compact yet massive forms possess a savage, majestic grandeur which is never to be forgotten. The famous statue of a god which is reproduced in Pottier's work, the procession of warriors, with its greater economy and driving force than that of Yazilikaya, and the hunting scenes with that sense of movement often lacking in similar illustrations, are on a par, in their own very different style, with the masterpieces of Assyrian art.

Zenjirli, which is situated by the slopes of the Amanus, was extensively excavated by the *Deutsche Oriental Gesellschaft* and has greatly enriched the museums of Berlin and Istanbul. The monuments discovered there have become famous through the work of the German archaeologists von Luschan, C. Humann, R. Koldewey, Sachau and Schrader, and readers will be able to refer to their *Ausgrabungen in Senschirli*.<sup>2</sup> As the site is so well known, we shall do no more than indicate the main features of the art and influence of the Hittites as they here manifest themselves. As Dr. Contenau points out, it is possible "to distinguish four layers which can be dated as follows: 1. remains of unimportant and unfortified buildings

<sup>1</sup> Contenau, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Berlin, 1911.

earlier than the thirteenth century; 2. (towards 1300) the interior circular wall of the city and a palace; 3. two contiguous palaces which represent the architecture of the period at its height (tenth to eighth centuries); 4. the destruction of the city and its reconstruction by Asarhaddon (seventh century), the probable period of the wall which ran round the enclosure of the city."<sup>1</sup>

It is also worth noting that among the non-military buildings there is the most perfect example of the *bet-hilani*, which played such an important part in all ancient architecture. We shall borrow the description given by Dr. Contenau, for whilst this has been the subject of much discussion, he has provided the best definition of this type of dwelling. "Basically, it is a building with a flight of steps and a peristyle supported by two columns in front; this gives access to a room which has greater height than depth. From there a corridor leads into a similarly designed but larger room. One of the characteristics of these palaces (whose name, so texts tell us, comes from the language of Amurru) was that it probably had windows (cf. Canaanite *hallon*, window)."<sup>2</sup>

There are many sculptural works at Zenjirli and these have been sufficiently described and reproduced to make it unnecessary for us to do so again. The huge German work already referred to, together with that of Dr. Contenau, will in any event provide an admirable survey. The lions of the gates, marked with a rosette on their shoulders as were the flocks of Ishtar, the bas-reliefs of composite animals— weird creatures which Hittite imagination excelled in creating, and in which it was unsurpassed either by the monsters of the Etruscans or of the Mexicans—the startlingly lifelike statues of kings, the images of gods which yield interesting information about the Hittite pantheon, and finally, everyday scenes and incidents from court life, place Zenjirli among the most intriguing and enlightening sites.

Whilst archaeologists were clearing the ruins of palaces, fortresses, temples and cities, linguists were devoting themselves to the study of texts, inscriptions, tablets and seals. We do not propose to go into details about the different views which divide the scientific world but shall limit ourselves to a summary of our knowledge of the Hittites' language and writing, as it stands at the present time. The deficiency of bilingual inscriptions has enormously complicated the work of philologists, and the deciphering of hieroglyphics, as they appear, for example, on the bull of Tarkondemos, was a great test for scholarly patience and ingenuity. It is largely due to the efforts of the Czech Professor Hrozný that interpretation of them has been possible; he has provided the means for many texts to be read, and until further information is forthcoming, his work should be held

<sup>1</sup> Contenau, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

as definitive. Working on the basis of similarities with different European languages (for the Hittites were clearly Indo-Europeans and there consequently had to be certain points of comparison between their tongue and those of peoples of the same origin), Professor Hrozný found certain keys which eventually unlocked the doors preserving the mystery. In his *Les Inscriptions hittites hiéroglyphiques*,<sup>1</sup> and *Le Hittite, histoire et progrès du déchiffrement des textes*,<sup>2</sup> it is possible to follow the sequence of his work as it gradually threw more light on a language which had so long remained unknown.

Excavations and the decipherment of texts have yielded quite a detailed knowledge of the history of the Hittite empire; this immediately enables us to determine three periods in monuments and inscriptions, and each is basically distinct from the other. This division, which was adopted by Dr. Contenau, corresponds to the proto-Hittite period, then the Hittite Empire of Boghazköy and finally the reign of the people known as Syro-Hittites.

The proto-Hittites were not Hittites properly so called, or at least, only to a certain extent. Though these conclusions are still controversial ones, there seems little doubt that the greater part of the population was made up of Asianics; this is a name which is given to inhabitants of Western Asia who were neither Semites nor Indo-Europeans—those who are sometimes referred to as Japhetites. The Asianic can be distinguished as a recognizable ethnic type. In just the same way, this difference manifests itself in their language, religion and art. As far back as the third millennium, some Indo-Europeans had already infiltrated into the Asianic preserve, and these may have been the Luvites. From the blend of these newcomers and the Asianics (who were either aboriginals or even earlier invaders) was born the culture known as proto-Hittite, so called because it possessed a composite character in which Asianic and Indo-European elements existed side by side.

Where did the Indo-Europeans come from? This question has caused a great deal of ink to flow and it is still a long way from being answered. Were they from India? or perhaps from Europe? The term "Indo-European", by the very fact that it is intentionally vague, has intensified the lack of certainty which prevails among scholars and the impossibility of working out a still insoluble problem without assumption or error.

The true Hittites, those who were indisputably Indo-European in language, ethnic type, names and religion, arrived in Asia Minor towards the end of the third millennium. There they found an Asianic population already partially Indo-Europeanized by earlier immigrations—perhaps by the Luvites?—and their ascendancy

<sup>1</sup> Paris, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, 1931.

became so widespread that it now becomes possible to speak of a Hittite Empire. The proto-Hittite civilization was distinguished by the pottery of Alishar, and by the sculpture and so-called Cappadocian tablets which were found in the city's ruins. Its forms were borrowed, in part from the Aegean world and in part from Babylonia. Sumer still set all standards in the art of seals. Semitic society does not seem to have played a part in this process of artistic evolution and it now shows all the features which were to develop and expand during the great, truly Hittite periods. The transition from proto-Hittite to Hittite was not an abrupt one; there are never any jumps of that kind in the world of aesthetics any more than there are in history. It was probably the outcome of Indo-European elements which generally took root or were assimilated; these became increasingly dominant following the invasion, or invasions, which left the Indo-European people called Hittites as the true masters of the land. They were able to drive back and supplant the Asianics in such a way that the contribution of this people was gradually to diminish in the years after 1900 B.C.

At this time, the Hittites were ruled by great conqueror kings—Anitta, Tudhalia I, Pasarma, Pavahtelmah, Labarna, Hattusil I and Mursil I—who led their victorious armies far afield in an invincible surge. After Syria, Babylonia fell into their hands. After Telepinu, the uninterrupted sequence of successes was brought abruptly to an end through a military revival in Egypt and aggression by the Mitannians and Hurrians, who, for the Hittites, were dangerous neighbours.

Two centuries of hesitancy and vacillation, and then the triumphant march was resumed. The Empire which had been built at the cost of so much effort by its early conquerors was recovered by rulers like Tudhalia II and Hattusil II, and its former conquests were restored. Their power became stable and deep-rooted; this was the period of the great kings who were to consolidate the might of the Hittites and build a wonderful civilization. Suppiluliuma, who reigned from about 1388 to 1347 B.C. is the very type of the warrior-king and bringer of civilization. A contemporary of Tutan-khamen, he agreed to the marriage between one of his sons and an Egyptian princess, and entered upon important correspondence on this subject which the archives of Tell el Amarna have preserved.

The disorders of Egyptian politics, and the pacifistic idealism of Akhnaton encouraged the spirit of conquest in the Hittites, but when once the warlike pharaohs stood up to them, the power of the Empire of Boghazköy went into decline. A hundred and fifty years after the death of Suppiluliuma, battered by the Egyptians and the Assyrians but probably weakened also through the internal

disintegration which finally undermines even the most powerful and seemingly strong and healthy states, the Hittite Empire collapsed amid the confusion of peoples moving in from the north and east, and perhaps impelled by the immense upheavals stemming from the advance of the Sea Peoples.

Yet for eight hundred years Hittite might was supreme over Asia Minor, penetrated Egypt and Mesopotamia, and influenced Persia and the Aegean in such a way that this vast melting-pot formed one of the most remarkable civilizations of the ancient world—the civilization of Boghazköy. Its name encompasses not only the ruins of ancient Hattusa but those of Yazilikaya and Höyük; it commanded the whole of Anatolia and extended beyond it towards Arslan Tepe.

Its prosperity was due pre-eminently to its soil's mineral wealth. Iron was particularly abundant there, and it should not be forgotten that during this period the metal was so rare that the smallest piece of it was like a precious jewel; it was set in gold in exactly the same way that we now set diamonds. Very rare at first and much sought after, then becoming more common and even more in demand through its practical uses, iron became the basis of the Hittites' commercial power. They were not a merchant people, or at any rate, they did not seek to dominate sea trade: they were quite content with the land routes as their outlets. But they were the masters of mineral wealth and the "iron kings"; by virtue of this fact, and whether they liked it or not, all Empires became tributary to them, and their skill in using the metal yielded by their mountains increased their wealth and their power even further. In a well governed and well organized Empire like theirs, in a society founded upon a strict and judicious legal system, and consisting of an hierarchy in which the throne was supported by a strong, faithful and respected nobility, commercial wealth of this kind could have been the stay of a true hegemony—especially with the help of a warrior peoples' arms—and the Hittites came very near to achieving it.

The Syro-Hittites were the people whom we find settled in Syria from 1100 B.C. The great Empire of Asia Minor no longer existed. The successors of Suppiluliuma had merged with the Semite population and with the Hurrians, and now formed a kind of confederation of little states which we know chiefly through their struggles with Assyria. This, however, was the period when Carchemish and Zenjirli achieved their power and established the third degree of Hittite civilization which we referred to before. These sites are so different from Boghazköy that the interval in time and space does not sufficiently explain their change in character. Between the Anatolian Empire and the Syrian confederation, many events took

place. Obscure people like the Muski succeeded in gaining a certain degree of power which was even able to influence an ancient culture like that of the Hittites; and the Hurrians and Mitanni also had their share in the new art. Finally the growing importance of Assyria can be recognized in the themes and forms which the Hittites borrowed from them for their sculpture and glyptics. In the same way that the proto-Hittites were not of absolutely pure Indo-European stock, the Indo-European element of the Syro-Hittites was again blended with strains which were Asianic and Semitic. But Hittite strength of character remained so sturdy and vigorous that the monuments of Carchemish and Zenjirli are in their way as typically Hittite as those of Boghazköy. Not least among the virtues of this original and inventive civilization is that through all the changes of fortune which it met with in its history, both in its setbacks and at the height of its power, it preserved the individual aesthetic character which set a distinctive seal on all its creations.

In their language and in their law, which is reminiscent of the Germanic *wergeld*, the Hittites were clearly Indo-Europeans. Their religion also retains the mark of their origin, and when we compare their pantheon to those of the Germanic deities on one hand and of the gods of the Hindus on the other, many similarities can immediately be discerned. We said that the Hittites worshipped a great many gods; it seems truer to say that these were different aspects of a single great god, who was known by different names and credited with varying attributes in the provinces of the Empire. It is also possible that they adopted some of the Asianic and Luvite deities whom they found established in the territory before their arrival. But their chief god was the personification of the elementary forces of nature, the god of thunder like Zeus, and the storm-god like Thor. The same characteristics occur again in the Hindu god, Indra.

Among the Hittites, the king was also the high priest, by virtue of his office but above all because he must have been regarded as of divine origin and therefore able to act as an intermediary between the gods and men. We have quite a good knowledge of the Hittites' ritual, their hymns, their magical rites and even their sacred literature. Dr. Contenau's book contains a summary of the great myths of Ashertu, of the Great Snake, and that of Telepinu, which recalls the Syrian legend of Tammuz or Adonis.

Tell Halaf in Upper Mesopotamia is 100 miles to the north-east of Aleppo, near the source of the Khabur, a tributary of the Euphrates. It was excavated by Baron von Oppenheim, who discovered it in 1899. Inhabited from remotest antiquity, the site yielded some wonderful statues of a pre-Hittite or proto-Hittite period, and von Oppenheim also cleared a temple-palace which dated back to

*circa* 2000 B.C. and was probably built at that time by an Aramaean prince. This was one of the most important centres of civilization—for the Mitannians in the first place and subsequently for the Hittites. As the outcome of a number of campaigns, the German archaeologist was able to bring away an extraordinary collection of works of art which was big enough to fill a museum. It has thus been possible to restore the sanctuary of the god Teshub; with its colossi almost 3 metres high, its immense animals, its large basalt statues, and its strange and very vivid bas-reliefs, it gives a striking impression of Hittite art, or of an art which was closely akin to it. It is one of the most intriguing and compulsive collections of ancient art which we possess, and is of even greater interest than what has so far been recovered from Zenjirli, Carchemish or Boghazköy.

Baron von Oppenheim's discoveries are all the more important because at Tell Halaf they included the successive layers of many different civilizations, the oldest of which undoubtedly goes back further than the third millennium. This is the civilization of Jebel el Beda, the "white mountain" of ancient cemeteries which contained statues and stelae in Chaldaean style.

The temple of Teshub itself was reconstructed by King Capara, son of Chadianon, who reigned *circa* 1200 B.C. It contains the works of very different periods, and these were rather curiously gathered together—not in the fashion of a museum, of course, but as if romanesque and gothic statues were housed side by side with those of the renaissance in a baroque church. There can be nothing more fascinating than to observe how, despite the centuries separating them, the large statue of the sitting goddess (which dates back to the period of Eanatum—*circa* 2850) harmonizes with the small limestone bas-reliefs contemporary with Mesilim and Ur-Nina (*circa* 3000) on one hand, and with the large statues of the façade, which do not go back any further than Gudea (2400) on the other; the seated group, however—and this belongs to about 2500—shows a clear kinship with the colossal animals which antedate it by four centuries.<sup>1</sup> Here better than anywhere else, we can recognize not only the composite character of this art, but its profoundly original creative spirit, which availed itself of the different forms offered by the older Mesopotamian civilizations to produce a work of individual inspiration, fired by its own powerful and distinctive genius.

The pottery discovered at Tell Halaf also reveals the syncretic character which we observed in the other forms of Subarian-Hittite art. The vases of Baluchistan and Turkestan are not unlike the ware discovered by Baron von Oppenheim; we find the same decorative

<sup>1</sup> According to Baron von Oppenheim's dating, which is not accepted by all archaeologists, however.



themes in use, though it has not been possible to determine whether they were communicated or how this could have been done. Technically this work is perfect; the quality of the paste, the handwork, the outline of the convex ware, and above all, the way in which the designs are arranged on their rounded bellies are the marks of unerring skill. The geometrical ornamentation is in some respects reminiscent of stylized Susian forms, and it is not unusual to recognize a theme recalling the Cretan double-headed axe, though we cannot say whether this is an abstraction on a subject from nature or pure artistic invention.

Polychromy was achieved through the use of black and orange, combined with a light brown or beige background to produce extremely clever colouring, and a contrast in mat and brilliant effects which gave the pottery of Tell Halaf a particular charm. The human form is sometimes represented, though very rarely; most often we see a collection of signs—probably symbolic ones—which refer to lost myths or some unknown conception of the afterlife. The very variety of these decorative themes shows that during a period possibly earlier than the fourth millennium, Tell Halaf must have been very important for the part it played in the concentration of cultures, and as a "turn-table" on which commercial and artistic exchange served in the spread of civilization. For too long it has been customary to think of ancient civilizations as static; on the contrary, there has never been a period when communication was more frequent or more productive than in the fourth millennium. Only the period of invasions in Europe, known in German as the *Volkerwanderung*, was able to set so many forms and ideas in motion. This was made very clear by Baron von Oppenheim in his study of Subarian civilization.

The German archaeologist recognizes the features of what he calls Subarian civilization in the monuments of Tell Halaf. "In the Near East," he writes,<sup>1</sup> "besides the Egyptian and Babylonian civilizations, there was a third culture, the Subarian, which was powerful and independent, and is met with as early as the fourth millennium B.C. It has hitherto been customary to apply the term 'Hittite' to the work of this civilization. This must be changed, for the Indo-German Hittites did not reach this region of Asia before 2000. The Hittites, for their part, received the indigenous Subarian civilization at the same time as its gods and art. It was in the area of the sources of the Khabur, so favoured by nature, at Tell Halaf and in its neighbourhood, that I found the place where Subarian culture originated. This is where the most ancient and prolific archaeological site of all the great land of Subaru is to be found."

<sup>1</sup> Von Oppenheim, *Tell Halaf*, Leipzig, Brockhaus.



The history of Tell Halaf reflects the changing fortunes of Subarian civilization. After two thousand years of glory, Subaru was destroyed by the Hittites or the Mitannians, who, in their turn, were driven out by the Aramaeans seven centuries later; Capara, the son of Chadianon again established his capital at Tell Halaf and revived something of the city's ancient splendour. Capara also fell towards 1100 B.C., however, when the Assyrian Tiglat Phalazar destroyed his capital and built another. Then the Medes put the Assyrians to flight; the Romans followed and the Arabs, but none of these invaders restored the magnificence which the ancient capital of Subaru had once known.

In the monuments of Tell Halaf, M. Contenau sees one of the most distinctive examples of Mitannian art. The Mitannians, whose true country was Naharain, the territory stretching north of Babylonia between the Tigris and Euphrates, were very powerful at one period of their history. The archives of Tell Halaf show what great store the pharaohs set by their friendship. Were they Asianic like the Hurrians or Indo-Europeans like the Hittites? It is difficult to say. Their names are Aryan and like those of the Hindus; the treatise on horse training—one of the most intriguing documents in their language—contains many terms which clearly originated in India. Their political constitution was a hereditary monarchy supported by a feudal system. Their religion, which was eclectic, associated the national gods, Teshuk and Hepa, with other deities probably belonging to subject peoples or to neighbours they had conquered.

In Anatolia as in Palestine, archaeological interest in recent years has been chiefly directed towards the sites which could teach most about the protohistory or even the prehistory of the Hittites—their historic period already being quite well known; special mention should be made of the findings of Turkish archaeologists in this field. They form an altogether remarkable "school" which has been in existence for little more than twenty-five years and has produced some very fine scholars. This was for the most part under the direction of Bossert, the Director of the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Istanbul, and Güterbock, the Professor of Hittitology in the University of Ankara, where he was replaced in 1949 by a Turk, Dr. Sedat Alp.

The research carried out by Hamit Kosay at Alaca Höyük, those of Tahsin Ozgüç at Karahöyük and Kultp, those of Akurgal between 1949 and 1952 at Bayrakli near Ismir, and those of Gökçe at Polatli, have proved extremely valuable; Kosay's study of the graves of Alaca, and the tombs of Amasya in 1950, have made it possible to put forward quite a likely dating theory in relation to the periods already known of Trojan civilization.

The sites of Mersin and Alaca can be included among the most productive tells in the whole of Anatolia and Cilicia. In Seton Lloyd's *Early Anatolia* (London, 1956) there is an explanatory diagram which illustrates how twenty-five successive layers of civilization rose above one another at the same point—from early neolithic times to the period of the Byzantine Empire. At Alaca, on a site visited by Perrot as early as 1861 and excavated by Chantre in 1863, the Turks found cemeteries dating back to the copper age; these were rich in funerary treasures which included arms, plates and dishes made of precious metals, and iron-bladed daggers—a very great rarity at this time. The technical skill and the discernment which metal-workers exercised during the chalcolithic period were fully brought to light by the discoveries made in the tombs of Alaca. A description and commentary on them will be found in the work entitled *Les Fouilles d'Alaca-Höyük* by H. Z. Kosay, published in Ankara in 1951.

## CHAPTER X

### CRETE

UP to the time when Sir Arthur Evans, as though with a wave of a magic wand, caused the royal palaces of Knossos to appear from the earth, what did we know of Cretan civilization? Almost nothing. There was talk of a king called Minos, probably a mythical figure, who ruled his island with wisdom and then entered Hades to take his seat as a judge. Great things were said of the miraculous work of an artist—both a genius and something of a wizard—who created statues endowed with life and who, to satisfy the passionate desires of Queen Pasiphae, made a cow of bronze in which she concealed herself to receive the embraces of a bull. Held captive with his son, Dedalus escaped from the labyrinth by devising man's earliest means of flight, but Icarus, who wanted to take advantage of it to reach the sun, fell to his death in the sea.

Legend had woven a fabric of mystery around Crete, and everything about it was tinged in some measure with the quality of myth. It was known, none the less, that the island had had a culture which had influenced that of the Greeks, but nothing was known of its character, and no one could have guessed at the sensational discoveries which Sir Arthur Evans was to reveal and which continue to amaze us; with every passing year, indeed, excavations add something new to the many treasures of Aegean art which we already possess. Year by year we need to follow the works in which the great English scholar considered what advances were made in Cretan archaeology,<sup>1</sup> but better still, we should actually visit the sites of new discoveries, in order to grasp what is now offered in a sphere where artists can indulge their curiosity.

The expression "resurrection of dead cities" can be more readily applied to Crete than to any other centre of archaeological research for there, indeed, we find a civilization which is complete and preserved down to the last detail—a civilization so strange that it is in some respects unlike anything we already know, and so modern in others that its works are sometimes like those of the art of today. If then, we remember that this civilization lasted nearly two thousand years, until the time when it was destroyed by the Dorian invasion, we find that all the stages in the evolution of man's genius

<sup>1</sup> *The Palace of Minos*, London, Macmillan.

appear on this island in an uninterrupted sequence, one above the other, from the earliest tentative efforts to the subtlest and most exquisite achievements of an art which has all the perfection of the Renaissance and all the grace of Rococo.

Among the excavations which have brought new things to light, we should mention those of the agora of Athens, started in 1928, and subsidized by J. D. Rockefeller, who placed 60,000,000 francs at the disposal of the American School of Athens to accomplish this work; the Danish excavations under Frederik Poulsen, Mogens Clemmensen and Constantin Rhomaios at Tegea and Calydon, where the ruins were found of three successive temples dedicated to Artemis Laphria, a temple of Dionysos, some Hellenistic tombs, a marble heroon, and so on; those of the American school at Corinth, which produced some curious architectural work in terra-cotta; those of the British School of Athens and in Sparta, where the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia yielded the fantastic terra-cotta masks which have occasioned so much discussion; the excavations of Keramopoullos at Thebes, where Cadmus' palace was cleared; and among many others, those conducted with so much energy and insight by the French School of Athens. But apart from a more accurate knowledge of Greek prehistory, especially since the work by Blegen and Wace on the Helladic periods, Greece, in latter years, cannot be said to have taught us anything of which we were wholly unaware; recent excavations have increased and completed the knowledge we already had, they have added to the number of art treasures, but nowhere as in Crete have scholars been dazzled by the emergence from the unknown of a complex so interesting and full of information as that of the palaces of Knossos and the ruins of Mallia, Hagia Triada and Phaistos.

The clearance of the palaces of Knossos can be regarded as one of the most important events in the history of modern archaeology. Schliemann had already guessed what the site was capable of yielding, but all sorts of difficulties had prevented him from excavating there. The credit for this goes to Sir Arthur Evans, and he deserves the very highest esteem for the service he performed in making the world aware of Cretan civilization.

Much has been said about the restorations which so surprise the tourist, as his path leads him among buildings in such excellent condition that even the hardest to please could settle in them quite comfortably. The perennial problem of preserving ruins recurred here as elsewhere, and the question of whether to restore things to their original condition as far as possible, or to leave them in the state to which time had reduced them, faced archaeologists with an impossible dilemma.

It is easy to object to those who favour restoration that there is nothing more artificial than arbitrary work in which the archaeologist's imagination makes up for the concrete data he lacks. There is also talk of the "ethics of ruins", and it is said that it is better not to touch the ruins themselves other than to prevent them from deteriorating any further. Either it is thought sufficient to preserve ruins in the state in which they were found, or else the fragments still remaining on the site are used in an attempt to restore them. It is impossible to make rules of universal application. In some instances it is criminal to restore ruins whose very antiquity and decay endow them with a kind of holy majesty. On the other hand we should remember that the object of archaeology is to serve learning and culture rather than to please devotees of the picturesque; from this standpoint, restorations which are carried out with the necessary degree of caution can be of immense value.

Where Knossos is concerned, there can be no doubt that after the initial shock of finding a palace in such excellent condition, one is filled with wonder at the chance of a detailed study of the ways of life of the ancient Cretans, and the masterpieces of their architecture and painting; these were left where they were whenever this was possible, and were replaced by exact copies where the originals might have suffered from the rigours of the climate. The propylaea of the south, for example, with their columns, their pillars and their frescoes, the great staircase, faithfully restored to its original condition, the north entry and its portico, the queen's megaron with its paintings and vases still in position, the hall of the double-headed axe, and so on, give us an accurate picture of what a Cretan palace was like several thousand years ago, with its forms, its colours, its red and black columns with their wide tops and slender bases, its enormous staircases, its mural paintings, its chambers, its sanctuaries and its stores.

Of course these ruins would not have conveyed so much if the archaeologist had been content to leave the walls and columns exactly where he found them without any attempt to return them to their original positions, or to restore and in some instances replace the parts which were missing. These restorations were undertaken with such a strong sense of scientific scruple that there were no concessions to arbitrary judgment or fancy. They were justifiable because they were not the outcome of inventive imagination and were based on the facts immediately available; but above all, they were necessary. At Knossos, as at Herculaneum and Ostia, there were buildings of several storeys which had to be reassembled, and the need to support the upper storeys made it necessary to re-erect columns and walls and remake ceilings. This was also

necessary because the gypsum from which the paving-stones gate-posts and the bases of columns were made was so fragile; Pendlebury tells us that it "melts like sugar through the action of rain and would eventually have disappeared completely".<sup>1</sup> Every detail, then, was carefully studied and authentically reproduced; when missing wooden beams were replaced by concrete ones, these were given the same shape, size and colouring which were found in existing beams.

The same concern for accuracy was brought by E. Gillieron to the task of restoring the frescoes, and with their architectural decorations, they sometimes helped to complete some of the details of columns, architraves and cornice which were missing. The question of whether Sir Arthur Evans was justified in his restorations thus seems to be answered, even if it is at the expense of those who prefer picturesque ruins to a restored building, for the primary object of work of this kind is to preserve both places and objects.

The beauty and majesty of Knossos have remained intact but we cannot expect to find unity or homogeneity when we go there. Its buildings were destroyed several times by earth tremors, then rebuilt and altered. It was no easy matter to sort out what belonged to each distinctive period in the midst of all the confusion wrought by seismic freaks in work which had accumulated over centuries. From the neolithic period of Knossos until its final destruction—when it was no more than a heap of ruins, completely abandoned by its Greek occupants, as though it were cursed or haunted—building phases followed one another, and each one brought a change to the layout of the city and to the character of its palaces.

Relations between Crete and pre-dynastic Egypt prove that the island's civilization was already in full flower at a time earlier than 3500 B.C., and the important neolithic settlements at Knossos—the largest and most extensive found in Europe or the Middle East according to Pendlebury—attest the presence of a people who were culturally quite advanced. The tall houses, which were paved with clay or pebbles, had walls made of sun-baked bricks erected on stone foundations.

Crete's historic period is divided into three phases called Early Minoan, Middle Minoan and Late Minoan, and each of these is sub-divided under the headings I, II and III. The first Late Minoan period, abbreviated to LM.I, has three further divisions, known as a, b and c. These are dated as follows:

Early Minoan I: 3400 to 2800. II: 2800 to 2400. III: 2400 to 2200.  
Middle Minoan I: 2200 to 2000. II: 2000 to 1800. III: 1800 to 1500.  
Late Minoan I: 1580 to 1450. II: 1450 to 1375. III: 1375 to 1100.

<sup>1</sup> *A Handbook to the Palace of Minos*, London, Macmillan, 1933.

Early Minoan I still remained strongly under the influence of Egypt, which was at this stage in the period of its three earliest dynasties: copper was introduced and there is evidence of a considerable advance in civilization. Of this period, which is sometimes referred to as sub-neolithic, little remains at Knossos apart from several houses which were not destroyed when the palace was built later on.

We have a better idea of Early Minoan II from R. B. Seager's excavations at Vasiliki than those of Knossos, where only one house of this period was found. Dwellings were two and often three storeys high, built of bricks, braced with beams and surfaced with stucco. Even at this early stage, the skill and art of the architect had attained an extraordinary degree of perfection.

Early Minoan III complemented and consolidated the technical achievements of the earlier period, but where Knossos was concerned, at all events, without adding anything more than the mysterious hypogeum discovered under the southern porch of the palace—the curious chamber hewn out of the rock, 8 metres wide and covered with a beehive vault which was 16 metres high.

All the early palaces of Knossos belong to Middle Minoan I, which roughly corresponds with the eleventh and twelfth dynasties of Egypt, and the reign of Hammurabi in Babylon. A very complicated distribution system shows the care which Cretan engineers brought to the laying on of a water supply by means of a skilful arrangement of pipes; in this they give as much evidence of their practical ingenuity as they do of their scientific knowledge.

Material progress of this kind was improved even further in the course of Middle Minoan II. An ornamentation of earthenware slabs referred to as "mosaic of the city" represents the façades of houses, and completes what we learn of architecture in the different buildings of this period. These houses were tall, rectangular and sloping-roofed; they had windows with wooden cheeks and their panes (glass was unknown) must have consisted of sheets of parchment dressed with oil.

One of the earthquakes so common in Crete (in 1929 the museum of Candia was almost ruined in this way) ravaged Knossos and most especially Phaistos. But the palaces built over the ruins represent Cretan art at its peak. With the Middle Minoan period, the work of architects and painters was outstanding. Dwellings were sumptuous and well protected against violent wind and the excessive heat of the sun by full, windowless walls; the rooms were lighted and ventilated from the top, thereby allowing the felicitous lighting effects which were applied in frescoes. The artist's imagination varied the form and design of columns and refined the delightful taste for

rococo which is reflected in the famous "miniature fresco" representing a gathering of women at a bull fight.

Aegean art never produced anything more exquisite or remarkable. Enchanting figures, sometimes reminiscent of Watteau and sometimes of Constantin Guys, depicted with delicate irony, even in the comic exaggeration of fashions—improbably slim waists, puffed sleeves and generous breasts—are painted with great subtlety and imagination—distinguishing these works as products of the finest period of Cretan art. Even more than in the House of Frescoes and the "Gatherer of Saffron", the aulic spirit of the Minoan palaces manifests itself in an aesthetic sense similar to that of eighteenth-century France or Germany.

Perhaps art went to an extreme of refinement with the advent of the Late Minoan period, which already contains the signs of decadence. We mean this, at all events, in the sense that there was a certain tendency towards stylization instead of direct and ironical observation (and this irony was a constant in the Cretan genius as is already evident in the Harvesters' Vase).<sup>1</sup> The succession of earthquakes dates from this period; the three Late Minoan phases represent the repairs and new building work undertaken after each disaster up to the time when foreign invasions, or tremors of even greater destructive force drove the inhabitants of Knossos to despair.

By this time, however, Cretan art had already given all it was capable of. It was now repeating itself with all the sloth and degeneracy of imitation. In whatever form disaster came, it struck down a civilization which already contained the seeds of its own destruction. Not the least important part in the study of Aegean antiquities is the continuity of a culture which developed according to its own laws for more than two thousand years, exchanged its produce with that of other countries, took its pottery to Egypt, Palestine and Syria, and, at the same time, borrowed their themes, forms and ideas to enrich its art.

This culture achieved an excellence which few countries have equalled. Paintings like those of the "Priest-King" at Knossos, or the fantastic garden discovered by Marinatos at Amnisos, were the product of an aesthetic sense which matched the exquisite refinement of Botticelli's frescoes. In its continuity, Aegean art emerged from the obscurity of the age of miracles, rose to its Gothic phase, fulfilled its renaissance, and followed this with its periods of baroque and rococo. This evolution took place over a period of two thousand years—without any jumps, intervals or undue haste—in such a way that the aesthetic constants of the human spirit assert themselves in Aegean culture with compulsive and telling clarity.

<sup>1</sup> See Jean Charbonneaux's *L'art égéen*, Paris, Van Oest.



The discoveries made by Sir Arthur Evans thus confront us with a civilization which was perfect in all respects, and all excavations confirm what was already known of the amazing brilliance of its artists. The statue of a young god was found, and this can be compared to the finest works of Greek sculpture; what we now know of the religion of the Aegeans enables us to discern myths and legends in the cult of a mother-goddess often represented with her child. In this deity, Sir Arthur Evans sees a trace of Anatolian or Syrian influence, and even a prototype of Christianity. There are seal-rings illustrating a veritable "adoration of the magi", and these anticipate the work of early Christian artists by more than two thousand years.

Idyllic though this religion may seem when we consider the image of the madonna and child—which was indeed quite a common one—it had its very much darker sides in cults like those of the snake or the bull, for example. It is important to remember that twenty centuries passed during the lifetime of what we call Cretan civilization; over such a long span, ideas and beliefs had time to develop to a considerable extent and even to change completely. None the less, it remains certain that the cults of the snake and the bull never disappeared from the island, even during the period when a more enlightened religion, possibly comparable to Christianity, is thought to have been established.

The continuity of the snake cult is confirmed by the magnificent statues of priestesses; one in gold and ivory can be regarded as a masterpiece in the art of all times and countries. The solemn, majestic women they represent display serpents wound round their arms. Also found among the ruins were terra-cotta pipes in which the sacred snakes were housed, and vessels from which they drank.

The bull cult provides the theme of so many frescoes, bas-reliefs and seal engravings that it is impossible to doubt the huge place it had in the life of the subjects of Minos. Sir Arthur Evans has shown that bull sports were associated with the cult of the mother-goddess and that they were held in a sacred enclosure before the temple. He even gave the quaint title "Our Lady of Sports" to the delightful chryselephantine statuette which dates back to the sixteenth century B.C. and represents, not a woman bullfighter as some have suggested, but the goddess herself in one of her ritual forms.

The bull sports, which possibly preceded sacrifices, and which may be seen either as a remembered token or as the origin of the legend of the Minotaur, came from Anatolia, where they were practised by men and were dedicated to a male god. In Crete they were quite naturally transformed into an act of devotion to the mother-goddess which was observed by women, or at least by men dressed as women.

The fact that ways of life of great refinement could exist side by side with the relics of infernal cults (for the snake is always associated with the deities of the underworld) illustrates the complexity of a civilization so advanced in other respects that, apart from its perfect aesthetic forms, it reveals a high degree of material and intellectual attainment. Long before the Phoenicians, who are given all the credit for the invention, the Cretans had discovered the alphabet and were making common use of it; and they worked metals so skilfully that their gold and silverware, like that found in Mallia, attained the very height of the jeweller's art. When Sir Arthur Evans declares that excavations in Crete were a perpetual source of amazement to him, we can only applaud the feeling of someone who did so much to return a forgotten civilization to the light. The reader cannot fail to share his emotion as the great archaeologist tells, in volume IV of his *Palace of Minos*, how he discovered a sanctuary in which a ceremony being enacted had been suddenly interrupted by an earthquake; objects had been thrown on the ground, and it seemed that the priests were going to return to restore order and finish the sacrifice. The scene is described with an almost visionary insight in which the gifts of the poet and seer give double effect to the worth and genius of the scholar.

Sometimes chance served his genius very well. Some peasants working in their vineyard found a tomb from which Evans uncovered one of the best preserved royal graves. The sanctuary still had the curious altar shaped like horns or a double-headed axe which Evans called "horns of consecration". This funerary temple, with its fine architecture, had a terraced roof from which it was no doubt possible to watch the funerary sports. In its name, the so-called "temple of the cow" still preserves the memory of the innocent creature which inadvertently caught its foot in a hole and thereby made possible the discovery of a remarkable building.

But whatever help he had from chance, the archaeologist accomplished an undoubted work of resurrection which has made it possible to determine the stages of Cretan civilization (forty years ago they were completely unknown) as clearly as those of our own history. From the aesthetic standpoint especially, these are artistic periods which offer intriguing comparisons with the art of our own time and have given us an understanding of their spirit and their feeling for forms. There is a well-known story of the archaeologist who saw the statuette of a woman when it had just been discovered at Knossos, and who exclaimed, "She's a Parisian!" In art literature, the title "La Parisienne" has remained with this statue ever since.

Yet we should be failing to appreciate the profound essence of

Aegean art if we judged it according to our own ideas and our own aesthetic criteria. Certainly, the rococo of Knossos is very much like that of Versailles. It reveals in the same way what a German critic, Robert West, has called the "hyperaesthesia of taste".<sup>1</sup> In the paintings of the Late Minoan period in particular, the time of the keenest and most vigorous works (like the portrait of the Priest-King, for example), objects are seen with a vision which rides above all superficial analogies and reveals a conception of time and space quite distinct from what we see in European art. The "garden style", as we find it at Knossos and Amnisos, is doubtless less strange than the "marine style" which produced the most beautiful period of Cretan pottery, but it is just as curious in its interpretation of nature. The way in which flowers and butterflies are distorted in an allusion to the double-headed axe constitutes a marvellous intellectualization of forms and stylization of the real. "Hyperaesthesia of taste" comes into play here in the passage from concrete to abstract, to proceed from form to concept, from sense datum to intellectual construction.

Marine decoration is the most wonderful creation of Aegean art. Indeed, it is important to bear in mind that the genius of Crete permeated the entire aesthetic of the Aegean Sea; thus, the frieze of flying-fish which was found at Phylakopi on the Island of Melos would have been worthy of the palace of Minos. Marine decoration appears in Cretan ceramics with the dawn of the Late Minoan period. Right up to then pottery had kept to its usual stages, starting with neolithic hand-made vessels (Crete did not receive the potter's wheel until about 2000); these were thick, dark brown and decorated with very primitive geometrical designs. Towards the end of this period, however, the designs disappeared, the paste reddened and grew harder. With the Early Minoan period, linear designs reappeared, incised in black, usually on a plain paste, or even in white spirals on a black background. At the same time, a new style appeared—known as Vasiliki—in which the potter took advantage of the red spots which chance produced in the firing of black vases to obtain unlooked for decorative effects. With the invention of the wheel, the Middle Minoan period was able to produce vessels which were more even and graceful than their predecessors. Now we see the emergence of Kamares ware, on which white, red and yellow designs are outlined against a black background. The beauty of Kamares style lies in the strong and noble restraint with which its ornamentation—perhaps it is the stylization of a naturalistic vegetable design—harmonizes its curves with the shapes of the vessels themselves. We should observe in passing that Cretan art was never

<sup>1</sup> *Der Stil*, Kurt Wolff, Munich.

strictly realistic at any time in its aesthetic evolution. It seems that naturalism with its concomitant accuracy of representation, was quite alien to the Aegean mind. Marine decoration, however obedient it may sometimes have been in reproducing plants and animals, only accepted these animals because they lend themselves to stylization or because stylization is inherent in them. The choice of themes tended towards objects which are already in themselves almost abstract forms—octopus, nautilus and shellfish; they were chosen, not for the character they present as living things, but, on the contrary, for the singularly ornamental properties they possess.

We now come to the ware of Late Minoan I; this offered a realistic vividness which was to diminish in the course of Late Minoan II, when ornamentation became artificial and formal; hence in Late Minoan III, the living form was seen as nothing more than a conventional and stylistic theme. It is important, indeed, to remember that these changes occurred over a period of five centuries. It was the triumph of marine decoration, with all its curious and extravagant effects. No other art of any period or country has produced anything comparable to the fanciful creatures which give life to the vases of Crete. This art was inspired by a world which man cannot normally gaze upon, which the swimmer glimpses, and only the diver can know in the strangeness of its light and complexity. This was the favourite world of Cretan artists, and we can never hope to recapture the bizarre and lavish beauty which adorned their vases with flying-fish, octopus, algae and starfish—all of them infused with an extraordinary feeling of the fantastic, all-pervading blue-green light of the seas' depths. Robert West was moved to say that "the sea itself seems to be the soil of Aegean art", and indeed one is led to ask what freak, standing alone in the history of art, could have inspired the choice of these themes. Not only do they appear on vases but in frescoes and polychrome reliefs which seem to be the expression in sculptural terms of the bottom of an aquarium. Once again we can speak of the hyperaesthesia of taste when we consider the pointed vases, similar to those carried by youths on the famous Knossos frescoes, and many examples of which have been found at Palaikastro; waves, algae, sea-anemones, sponges and nautili are merged in a strange landscape which perhaps one might see today from a bathysphere.

These vases with marine designs were scattered wherever Cretan artistic and commercial influences made themselves felt. Perhaps the finest example was found by the Swedish expedition under Professor Axel Persson at Berbati, near Mycenae, in July, 1935. Berbati is a site of major importance because with greater success than Mycenae or Tiryns, it has preserved a Mycenaean city with houses in such

good order that they enable us to know the ways of life of the inhabitants as well as we know those of the Romans. Berbati, which was probably ancient Prosymna and was inhabited from neolithic times, yielded a necropolis similar to that of Dendra and the famous treasure of Atreus, together with a wealth of arms, jewels, seals and pottery. Some of its vases are very fine examples of the so-called "palace style", reminiscent of those found at Triphylian Pylos, and sometimes reveal the curious motif which Evans referred to as "the three palms".

Not only did the zone of expansion of Aegean civilization cover the Aegean Sea itself, but it also entered into the trading ports of Syria and Palestine, influenced Egypt, made its way among the Hittites, and at the end of a long road which witnessed the distribution and debasement of its forms—though still they remained recognizable—it finally reached Central Asia, where Cretan themes astonishingly survived or were transposed.

In Crete itself, excavations are constantly bringing fresh wonders to light—not only at Knossos but at Phrati; there Doro Levi found some pottery of a previously unknown geometric style in the cave of Ilythia, which also yielded neolithic ware. There was a temple near the cave which had been known hitherto only in a reference by Strabo. At Mallia French archaeologists found a Middle Minoan palace which had been destroyed during the late Minoan period but was very important because it had never been rebuilt and there had been no further construction over its ruins. The most interesting thing about the Mallia ruins is that their monuments have virtually remained in their original condition; on other Cretan sites, however, the palaces and temples thrown down by earthquakes were rebuilt or altered so often that it is very difficult to attribute work to a particular period.<sup>1</sup>

An important necropolis, found in 1930, dating from the Early and Middle Minoan periods, and bearing the marks left by Achæan invaders in the Mycenaean period, contained a beautiful collection of vases. In considering the Mallia excavations, Sir Arthur Evans wrote, "At Knossos the remains of the most ancient palaces were for the most part destroyed or concealed by later building, whereas at Mallia the early palace remained relatively undamaged. It provides proof of the advanced civilization of Minoan Crete at the beginning of the period of the palaces, and an important link with the countries of the eastern Mediterranean in the days of Abraham and Hammurabi."

Our knowledge of Cretan prehistory was significantly amplified

<sup>1</sup> See *Fouilles exécutées à Mallia* by F. Chapouthier and J. Charbonneaux, Paris, 1928.

when Pendlebury discovered the "Three Arabs" cave. The caves of Crete had not thrown up such a distinctive discovery since the time forty years ago when D. G. Hogarth found the cave of Dicte referred to in mythology as the cradle of Zeus. We now have a good knowledge of how dwellings progressed in Crete—even from the days of its stone-age inhabitants, who lived in caves and then in open air settlements which mark the beginning of the so-called Minoan period.

The different strata or layers of the Three Arabs Cave (so-called because it was thought to contain a treasure guarded by the spirits of three Arabs) show the changes which followed one another in this underground dwelling; it was used first of all as a shelter up to the beginning of the bronze age, and then became a tomb. The cave is on the Trapeza Plateau, which overlooks the Plain of Lasithi. The deepest layers contain remains of the neolithic period, and mixed with them are potsherds decorated with incised lines and bearing the tubular handles which are peculiar to the Cretan pottery of this period. Through a whim of the artist, or more probably to conform with some magical conception, these tubular handles eventually assumed the shapes of eyes and noses, and led thereby to vases in human form.

With Early Minoan I, the dwellings were replaced by tombs. Then, in higher layers, other pottery remains are found which belonged to funerary equipment buried with the dead. As the custom of burying corpses in the cave continued through the centuries, deposits became increasingly plentiful. During the period of Early Minoan II (which means *circa* 2500 to 2300 B.C.), a large number of seals is to be observed, differing in style and origin, and some of them containing Egyptian scarabs. The finest of these seals is the one mounted with an ivory monkey; such is the perfection of its workmanship that it can only be compared to certain Sumerian originals; their features are reproduced in it so accurately that we may well wonder whether in fact it came from Mesopotamia. The treatment of the head, and the method of inlaying shells to represent the eyes are, indeed, directly inspired by Sumerian techniques.

Early Minoan II is also represented in the Three Arabs Cave by a number of bone statuettes of women, as crude and primitive in their relief as the ivory monkey was delicate, and by a new type of pottery similar to that found at Vasiliki; it can be distinguished by uneven flecks which were obtained by placing hot coals against the sides of the vase during firing.

## CHAPTER XI

### CYPRUS

THE antiquity and importance of Cypriot civilization have been brought to light through the excavations carried out by Swedish expeditions. They led to the discovery of many tombs and settlements whose ruins now enable us, mainly through the study of pottery, to form an accurate conception of the growth of arts and skills.

Excavations carried out on the island in recent years, especially those of Einar Gjerstad of Uppsala, have revealed a cultural continuity which reflects the evolution and transformation of eastern civilizations since prehistoric times. Tomb forms are particularly interesting: usually they were hewn out of the rock, with a chamber which was reached through a "dromos" or corridor. These tombs, which were at first at the surface, became deeper and deeper and then were made more elaborate with brickwork, both in the chamber itself and in the corridor, and with flat-stoned ceilings or overhanging vaults. The entrance often consisted of stone gates. The tombs of the copper age, a number of which were excavated by Gjerstad, date back to the period from 2000 to 3000 B.C. and have yielded rich funerary equipment. The so-called Tomb of the Nobles, in particular, is one of the Swedish archaeologists' most valuable discoveries. This, in fact, was the resting place of the Lords of Lapithos, a site on the north coast of the island where antiquities proved specially abundant. Tombs similar to those on the Mycenaean site of Dedra, where research was carried out by Persson and some remarkable discoveries were made, yielded vases of a type unlike anything known hitherto. Potters had perfected their skill to such a degree that they could give rein to every flight of imaginative fancy and taste. The composite vessels which combined the bowl, the amphora, the jar and the pitcher cannot possibly be related to any form existing elsewhere. Certain cult objects, such as offering-tables or altars, show the same linear decoration as vases and probably have their origins in the same aesthetic.

If the culture of the copper age was introduced into Cyprus by invaders from Asia Minor—as is often declared—we should not underestimate the originality of local artists. All through its aesthetic history, Cyprus was influenced, to a greater or lesser degree, by the outside world, but even its imitations were dominated by its own

personal character. In every period, whether it received its models from the Greeks, Egyptians or Romans, its native genius transformed them; though it might undertake its work according to some foreign design, what it produced was an original creation which invariably bore the stamp of its own nature.

The two earliest periods of the bronze age, from 3000 to 2000, and from 2000 to 1500 respectively, reveal a type of red pottery with a linear decoration which was sometimes incised and filled with white clay, and some white ware with black or brown linear designs. During the third period, from 1500 to 1200, local types degenerated, but a new model appeared which was made with the wheel and showed affinities with Aegean and Mycenaean art in its ornamentation. It was at this time that graves became exactly like those of the Mycenaeans, though remaining more modest in their proportions.

What may truly be described as the period of Greek colonization began *circa* 1100, at about the beginning of the iron age, and the tombs of Mycenaean type may at first have been the burial-places of the Greek invaders. They contain the same furnishings and pottery as those of Argolis, and their funerary treasures are like those of Dendra and Mycenae. The necklaces and bowed diadems, especially, are of the same style in the Cypriot tombs of Soli as those in the Mycenaean tombs of Dendra, which are older by two or three centuries.

It is interesting to note, furthermore, that Mycenaean civilization appeared in Cyprus at the very time when it was disappearing from Greece—a fact which demonstrates how a “colonial style” can persist when it had ceased to exist several centuries earlier in the country of its origin.

Soli is one of the most prolific sites on the island. Situated on the west coast, it occupies what may have been the position of ancient Aipeia, which King Philokypros probably renamed in honour of Solon. Not far from there, at Vouni or Vounos, excavations have revealed an ancient palace, almost as extensive as those of Crete, and a temple probably dedicated to Athene. Yet before this cult was introduced by the Greeks, the old religion of the bull and the snake, associated with one another in the same way that we saw in Crete, were probably the basis of all Cypriot rites. Dikaïos, who discovered a necropolis of considerable interest in 1932, found that the tombs contained the skeletons of bulls and some terra-cotta figurines which probably represented priests wearing bull masks. Like the tombs, these objects date from 3000 to 2500 B.C. One of the most intriguing finds was the terra-cotta reproduction or model of a *temenos*—something unique so far, and extremely valuable for the light it throws on Cypriot sanctuaries.



The Vouni model, found in 1931, is a kind of clay platform, 15 inches wide and 3 inches high. It represents a *temenos*, or open air temple—perhaps it might be better described as a sacred precinct—in which the priests are observing the ritual of the bull and snake. The work imparts a wonderfully vivid and graphic quality to the attitudes of its little figures, but perhaps it is all the more remarkable for the light it throws on primitive cults. The ceremony is taking place in the area of the circular *temenos* facing the entrance. "Three of the figures," writes Dikaïos in a description of the model, "have broken into a ritual dance, their hands joined together and two snakes hanging from them. Facing them is a kneeling figure, and right behind them there is a larger figure, probably the High Priest, sitting on a throne and wearing distinctive head-dress. Like the others, he has his hands crossed in a ritual attitude. On both sides there are dancers, also priests, who are sitting along the wall. To the right of the throne there are six standing figures, and to the left, behind it, are two others—a man and a woman carrying a child. Within the precinct, some horned animals, probably oxen intended for sacrifice, are contained in enclosures on either side of the gate."

This extraordinary work teaches us much of which we were previously ignorant concerning Cypriot religion. We see priests with snakes wound round their arms in exactly the same way as the "priestesses with snakes" in Crete. The priests perform ritual dances as in Crete, and if the illustrations of bullfights so common in Aegean art have not been found in Cyprus, there is still evidence of bull sacrifices, and of a snake and bull cult.

Here we are confronted by one of the oldest and most generalized religions of the Mediterranean; one of the most widespread as well, for in 1936, at Khafaje in Assyria, some jars were found which had contained sacred snakes and which, though different in form and decoration, served the same purpose as the terra-cotta tubes occupied by the sacred snakes of Knossos. Thus, sanctuaries dedicated to the snake cult appear at the same time in Northern Mesopotamia, in Cyprus and in Crete, where the discovery by Evans in 1931 of a temple full of "snake tables", of vessels of different shapes decorated with snakes, and of snake tubes with cups probably containing food attached to them, is proof of the way in which the religion persisted.

The Vouni model leads Dikaïos to conclude that in the early bronze age, the Cypriots had open air sanctuaries in which they performed their sacrifices and the ritual dances for which their priests wore masks. The rites were secret ones, restricted to the initiated and forbidden to the laity, as we can judge from the Vouni model, which shows a small figure indulging his curiosity and trying

to look over the precinct wall. From the fact that similar cults have been found in Anatolia, it can be deduced that early Cypriot civilization was probably introduced by an alien people from that country. This people may also have colonized Crete, contrary to the view of Evans; impressed by the Egyptian aspect of early Minoan civilization, he put forward the theory that there was a settlement of Egyptian refugees among the native Cretan population of the neolithic period.

Quite as important as the Vouni model, though for different reasons, is the red pottery vase recently discovered by Dikaois; it bears an inscription written in an alphabet which bears no relation to the Cypro-Minoan writing introduced into Cyprus from Greece. It is perhaps more reminiscent of Egyptian characters, and Evans's theory concerning Crete might well be applied to Cyprus as well—the peopling of the island by refugees who fled from the Delta during the reign of Menes—when we compare the Vouni inscription to those of Abydos.

On the site of Enkomi, north of Famagusta, Swedish excavations conducted by Einar Gjerstad confirmed the importance of a necropolis which yielded a profusion of Syrian and Mycenaean vases as well as bronzes, ivories, and some very beautiful ornaments of gold. Enkomi seems to have been a political and aesthetic distribution centre from the early bronze age, and this was mainly because of its position on the cross-roads of the exchange-routes which connected Anatolia, Syria and Egypt. It was this reason which impelled Claude Schaeffer to continue with excavations on this extremely prolific site. It is to M. Schaeffer, of course, that we are indebted for our knowledge of Ras-Shamra, which was not only one of the centres of Syrian culture, but also one of the markets where all the nations of the Mediterranean gathered their produce. At Ras-Shamra he had found a number of Cypriot objects which showed how common commercial relations were between the Cypriot city and the Syrian port immediately opposite. M. Schaeffer's discoveries at Enkomi have confirmed the theory that there was constant and even trade between the Syrian and Cypriot coasts. Enkomi was the island's great import and export centre. It was from there that the pottery so highly valued all over the Mediterranean was shipped, and it was there that the products of Syria, Egypt and Crete were unloaded.

The tombs cleared by M. Schaeffer have their share of mystery and probably date back to the days of the Hyksos, who reigned in Egypt during the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries B.C. What they contained above all was a large number of flasks of Syrian perfume. In the tombs of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, these were replaced by Mycenaean objects. This was the time when Cyprus

was turning from Egypt and Syria, and looked towards Mycenae. And not only did she import Argive goods for her own use but actually transported them to Ras-Shamra, where they were found in tombs. This maritime exchange diminished and virtually came to a standstill when the invasions of the Sea Peoples made trade dangerous. For Cyprus, however, this interruption was beneficial because, by limiting its import, export and transport trade, it fostered the development of local culture. A people whose relations with foreign countries become less frequent loses what it may have gained in influences which were often useful and productive, but it can profit from this to acquire a deeper and more accurate awareness of its own genius.

Among the most remarkable discoveries made in Cyprus, that of the *temenos* of Ajia Drini by Dikaïos in 1932 is particularly striking. More than 2,000 items of sculpture were accumulated in this temple—votive statues of all kinds, some of them even representing groups of figures and harnessed chariots. This place of worship, like the acropolis of Idali, was dedicated to an unknown deity; at Idali, on the other hand, the cult was aniconic, and this would explain the fact that no statues were found there. Ajia Irini's temple was found quite by chance when a priest by the name of Prokopios was working in his field with a plough so primitive that it was quite like those seen among terra-cotta votive groups of the third millennium. Like the temple of Idali, it was a *temenos*, a sacred enclosure containing an altar, dating back to earliest antiquity, but modified towards 1100 B.C. when the Greek invasion led Cyprus from the bronze to the iron age. Despite the variations in fortune to which the temple was later subjected, the deity worshipped there does not appear to have changed. The votive statues, some of which were life-size, continued to accumulate there, so that all the developments in style and technique over a period of six centuries are represented.

At Ajia Irini, then, we find what is virtually a history of Cypriot sculpture, from the geometric to the archaic period, with all the variations representing the different phases of Eastern or Greek ascendancy. The little groups of farmworkers and the warriors in their chariots, like the Chinese figurines of the Tang period, possess extraordinary vividness. If they are not as solemn and hieratical as large statues, and if they lack their monumental quality, they show a graphic sense of observation which seems to have remained one of the dominant features of Cypriot art. Also worth noting is the statue of a bull with the fore-part of a man; on the one hand, this links up with the centaurs of Greek art, and on the other with the kerubim of the Assyrians. The horned head of a man is strikingly

powerful and marks the transition from theriomorphic cults to anthropomorphism.

A *temenos* and some tombs were discovered at Ajios Jakovos. The temple dates from 1600 to 1200 B.C. and is the oldest to be discovered on the island. The *temenos* contained a number of pits where the remains of sacrifices, offerings and votive objects accumulated over the centuries. The *temenos* itself is not particularly interesting from the architectural point of view, but it offers a valuable point of comparison with later Cypriot sanctuaries of the historic period; these retained the same layout in the general arrangement of rooms. Native pottery was confused with Mycenaean vases, which were quite numerous, and with Egyptian alabasters, Babylonian cylinders, and a seal bearing the scroll of Tuthmosis III.

The fortress of Nitovikla, which was cleared on the slopes of the eastern side of Karpassos, also belongs to the late bronze age. It is a huge structure, built according to the same techniques as the temple of Ajios Jakovos. The necropolis of Curium was discovered by Mr. Dikaïos, curator of the Museum of Cyprus in 1933. Situated near Limassol, to the east of the ancient acropolis, it has revealed tombs even more important than those of Lapithos or Kythrea, which were studied by the Swedish expedition from 1927 to 1930. They also go back even further in antiquity, for the excavations at Curium reach into neolithic times. The main content of these discoveries demonstrates the originality of Cypriot culture during the neolithic age, and the evolutionary sequence which paved the way for the transition from the stone to the bronze age. During this period, native art achieved a nobility and loveliness which, in figured vases (the one with the lyre player for example) more than in the jars with a geometric ornamentation (the chequered pattern) give a sense of the strong personality and inventive power of local artists. The most interesting objects of this period are the ones which Mr. Dikaïos found in the necropolis of Kaloriziki, and which are clearly dedicated to the snake cult.

The discoveries made by Dikaïos would seem to conclude the debates which flourished round the origins of Cypriot civilization; when only the products of its iron and bronze ages were known, it was justifiable to ask who brought civilization to the island and from where they came. Today, however, we are confronted by a culture which was highly evolved as far back as the neolithic age, and which was to go forward from that time in a logical, continuous and uninterrupted sequence. Such was its progress that Cyprus now appears as one of the most important cultural centres of the Mediterranean—a fact which no one could have suspected a mere ten years ago.

Indeed, it was only following the operations of the Swedish expedition that it became possible to establish the order of sequences in the bronze age, but the period prior to 3000 B.C. was still a matter for conjecture. Mr. Dikaios now concentrated on the earlier period, which had only been very superficially studied, and discovered the great centres of civilization during the stone age—a time when Cyprus shows herself already possessed of a culture of considerable interest. The discovery of the site of Khirokitia on the road from Nicosia to Limassol at last provided what may now be considered as the beginning of the neolithic civilization.

The period of Khirokitia, which can be placed between 4000 and 3500 B.C., is distinguished by a collection of buildings which still have their share of mystery about them. The skeletons found there lend weight to the theory that this was a burial place, but on the other hand, the remains of offerings and sacrifices, and the important architectural complex, which is made up of two concentric circular enclosures, would support the conclusion that this was a temple. In the area around this structure, the remains of dwellings have been cleared, and these show evidence of at least four successive settlements, rising above one another in layers which reach an overall height of 4 metres. In the ruins of the building, which may have been a temple or a tomb, some stone vessels were found, and in the upper layers there were the remains of incised red pottery similar to the type found in the lower layers of the ruins at Erimi.

A large amount of this red pottery also emerged from the site at Sotira, whose level of civilization, probably dating from the middle of the fourth millennium, seems to follow on immediately from the Khirokitia period.

But there is evidence of considerable development in neolithic art when we come to the site of Erimi, near Limassol, which corresponds with the end of the fourth millennium. Here we find the red pottery already observed at the end of the Khirokitia period, and which covers the whole of the Sotira period; at Erimi, however, it only occurs in the deepest layers, and there are thirteen of them rising above one another, each containing a settlement. The general features of the architecture have not changed; there are still the circular stone huts supported by a kind of central pillar, but the evolution of pottery is significant, proceeding from the red ware, either plain or incised, to the red and white vessels decorated with naturalistic or geometrical designs.

Between the Erimi period, which represents the height of neolithic culture, and the beginnings of the bronze age towards 3000 B.C., the Swedish archaeologists found an intermediary stage at Kythraea and Lapithos, with the decline of the white and red pottery and the

appearance of a red glazed ware which came into current use during the bronze age.

We no longer need wonder from which islands or from which country on the European or Asian continents Cyprus received her civilization, for as far back as 4000 B.C. she is seen to have possessed an important culture which is characterized by the architecture of Khirokitia and by pottery whose development proceeded without interruption in the course of the fourth millennium. A relationship could undoubtedly be suggested between the burial-place of Khirokitia and the temples of Malta, and it may well be compared with those of the Balearics. It seems likely that these ruins are the remnants of a huge and very ancient civilization which continued to flourish on the islands when it had vanished from the continent; its relics, with all the mystery which surrounds them, can still stimulate the interest and the ingenuity of scholars. The origins of Cypriot pottery have been sought in Syria, in Mesopotamia and in Thessaly. Gjerstad's theory, which is based on affinities of style and technique with the pottery of Asia Minor, is well known, but can it be taken as quite conclusive? The advances which have been made in the archaeology of Cyprus during the last ten years have been so great, and they have revealed so many aspects of the island's prehistory, that we can confidently look forward to new discoveries which will probably bring a final solution or at least (for nothing can be absolutely final in a moving science like archaeology) make an important contribution to the body of our knowledge.

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